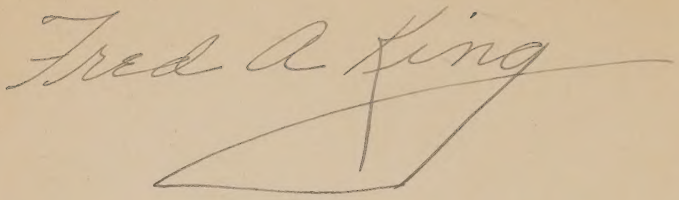
MURDER AT THE INN

by

LYNN BROCK



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MURDER

AT

THE

INN

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TO

MY WIFE

1929

MURDER AT THE INN

All of the characters and events in this book are entirely fictitious

CHAPTER I

On an afternoon towards the end of September, 1928, in accordance with an appointment made by letter, a spruce little elderly man presented himself at the offices of Messrs. Gore & Tolley, Private Inquiry Agents, in Norfolk Street, and was shown into the senior partner's room. The card which had preceded him gave his name as Mr. James Stanton, his address as 39-46 City Meads St., Westmouth, and his occupation as auctioneer, house agent and furniture-dealer. Colonel Gore, who had previously had some business dealings with him, personally, and was aware that this was a somewhat modest description of Mr. Stanton's activities, rose from his chair to receive his visitor with cordiality.

To Gore, who had been born near the big western city, and had maintained some relations with it all his life, the name Stanton was, perhaps, most intimately associated with the big yellow and vermilion pantechnicons which in his boyhood's days had been—and still, no doubt, were—familiar features of its residential suburbs. For the firm had always had a practical monopoly of Westmouth's house-removing business, in addition to the large and old-established furniture warehouse where solid Westmouth merchants had bought solid tables and chairs and bedsteads for generations. But Mr. James Stanton—who, with his son Henry, at present carried on the business—had still more extended interests, had specialized in heavy traction since the early days of the motor, had organized an undertaking business (monumental masonry included), with a widespread connection over the

west country, was an Alderman and a citizen prominent in all Westmouth's works of philanthropy and civic improvements, the author of half a dozen little volumes dealing with the antiquities of the city and its environments, and a first-class authority on glass, china, old furniture, old books, pictures, Roman remains, British camps, and the financial position of his fellow-citizens. A person, in effect, of high repute, considerable importance, and wide acquaintance in his native city.

He was a man of sixty-five or so now, with something of Mr. Pickwick in his effect, and something of Santa Claus. His bright eyes twinkled shrewd benevolence from behind their glasses, his small but dignified figure was rounded comfortably and reassuringly in the places proper to the prosperous citizen's elderliness. The crisp rosiness of his face was framed by neatly-trimmed whiskers, mustache and beard of silvery white. His still abundant hair, worn plainly, with some pride in its luxuriance, was silver, too. His gestures and air were brisk and energetic, a little in contrast with the soft-voweled deliberation of his speech. Perhaps in honor of a visit to London, he had obviously done himself extremely well at lunch.

He took some little time to reach the object of his visit to Messrs. Gore & Tolley, chatting discursively on general topics more or less associated with Westmouth, while he smoked a cigarette. But Gore, who knew the type, was well aware that he himself was being carefully weighed as the contemplated repository of Mr. Stanton's business, whatever it might prove to be. His client had been sitting facing him for nearly half an hour before he opened a small *attaché* case, produced some memoranda from it, glanced through them, and laid them on the knees of his carefully-cut trousers.

"Well, Colonel Gore," he said, "to come down to brass tacks, I've a small matter which I want looked into—which I've thought on and off, for the past twenty years or so, of having looked into. I've come to you because I know who I'm coming to. I've known *of* your family all my life—I had the pleasure of meeting your father and mother in the course of my business on several occasions—and, as a matter of fact, in 1879 my firm supplied the bed in which you were born forty-nine years ago. We completely refurnished Southleaze Park when your father married. I had the books dealing with the transaction in my hands yesterday."

Gore smiled.

"Sorry that you should have any responsibility for my existence, Mr. Stanton. However, it can't be helped now, I fear."

"I wasn't connected with the business of the firm at that time," Mr. Stanton submitted. "My connection with it dates from 1889, only. However, I'm quite prepared to accept that responsibility—if you're prepared to accept the little commission I have to offer you. I want to find out what became of a woman named Pauline Brazil, who left Westmouth in 1889 and came up to live in London. I want to find out not only what happened to her, but what became of her children, and of her children's children, if they had any. Now, sir, is that the sort of job your firm undertakes—I mean, of course, provided you have some particulars to start with?"

It was not, in point of fact, the sort of job in which Messrs. Gore & Tolley interested themselves to any extent—in general. But for old associations' sake Gore decided that anything the firm could do for Mr. Stanton it would do. He said so, genially.

"That's all right," nodded the visitor, in gratification. "As

I've said before, I prefer to know who's handling this little job for me. I'll say no more about that. . . . Now, about Pauline Brazil."

Pauline Brazil, it seemed, had been a relative of Mr. Stanton's—he did not specify in what degree—the daughter and only child of one Harold Stanton who, until the year 1889, had been the head of the Westmouth firm of furniture-dealers. At that date she had been married for three years to a young man named Herbert Brazil, who had been employed in her father's business. A child named Paul was then a year old. In that year, 1889, there had been a readjustment of the business, which had been transferred to William Stanton, the father of Gore's present client. Harold Stanton had left Westmouth at the end of that year, with his daughter, her husband, and her child, and gone to London. There, for the following two years, they had lived at a succession of addresses in the obscurer suburbs, set out in Mr. James Stanton's memorandum. During that period Harold Stanton had been employed by Messrs. Trebutt & Markham, furniture-dealers, at their Hampstead branch. He had died in 1891.

Some time before that date his daughter Pauline had gone to South Africa, with—presumably—her husband and child. They had returned, however, shortly before her father's death, and had written twice before the end of 1891 to ask for monetary assistance from Mr. William Stanton, who had refused it. At that time the Brazil's address had been "C/o Mrs. Trumper, 23 Flora Vale Avenue, Lewisham,"—the last address known for certain to Mr. Stanton.

From October 11, 1891, onwards, he had no knowledge of them, except that Brazil had probably been killed in 1899 during the siege of Ladysmith. It was also Mr. Stanton's belief—founded, however, merely on the statement of a rela-

tive of Brazil's now deceased—that Mrs. Brazil had separated from her husband before that time and was in England at the time of his death, running a small confectionery shop or eating-house somewhere in the neighborhood of Paddington.

The client handed his little sheaf of memoranda to Gore and rose.

"Rather meager material to give you, I'm afraid. And the last address I'm sure about is thirty-seven years back. Frankly, I don't expect much result. However, you'll do the best you can for me—and perhaps let me know from time to time whether you've had any luck."

Mr. Stanton departed without giving any reason for his desire to pick up this long-lost trail. That he attached some importance to its rediscovery was evident. But it was no less evident that his own curiosity with regard to it afforded him some mild private amusement—even if this effect was possibly in some measure due to the adjuncts of his lunch. There was nothing apologetic or deprecatory in his concise, intelligent self-confidence, yet it contrived to convey the impression that he felt his "little job" hardly deserving of Messrs. Gore & Tolley's attention.

For of course he made the inevitable remark, as he rebuttoned his spruce overcoat over his prosperous plumpness:

"You must come across some queer things in this business of yours, Colonel. Mrs. Melhuish—by the way, it was really she who decided me to come to you; we've been moving her into a new house and I had a little chat with her about you the other day.[1] We were talking about that case down at Waterley.[2] A queer business, that. Well, I'm afraid my little lot is very small potatoes to bring you."

[1] See *The Deductions of Colonel Gore.*
[2] See *The Slip-Carriage Mystery.*

Afterwards Gore recalled that he had watched Mr. Stanton's neat, efficient hands tidy the remaining contents of his *attaché* case deftly, snap its hasps, and lock it carefully. Quickly-moving, methodical hands, with long sensitive fingers that for nearly the allotted span of man's life had, no doubt, been doing things neatly and efficiently and methodically for their owner. There seemed no reason why their plump, healthy briskness should not continue for another twenty years to do the things which Mr. James Stanton wished them to do. . . .

Gore turned his visitor's memoranda over to a capable subordinate, and dismissed the matter of Pauline Brazil from his mind for some six or seven weeks. At the end of that time the only new fact to report to Mr. Stanton in connection with her was that a small confectioner's shop in Praed Street, kept by a woman named Pauline Brazil, had been burned down on April 22, 1901, under circumstances which had induced the Metropolitan Fire and Life Guarantee Company, with whom the premises and stock had been insured, to refuse payment. It seemed profitless to pass on this piece of information to Mr. Stanton, whose memory for some weeks further was submerged by more pressing and promising inquiries.

The little dapper, rosy-cheeked business man from Westmouth and his interest in Pauline Brazil were recalled to Gore's mind, indirectly, however, by a letter received on November 4th from another new client—a Mr. Clive Boyne, whose note-paper gave his address as Holden Lodge, West Chuley, Somerset. This gentleman also, it appeared, had been at least in some measure induced to consult Messrs. Gore & Tolley upon Mrs. Melhuish's recommendation. His desire was that Colonel Gore, personally, would go down and see

him on a date to be fixed by mutual agreement; also that he should be informed by return what earliest date would be convenient.

Neither his first letter, nor his second, accepting the date offered by Gore, made any reference to the nature of the business which he desired to discuss, except the rather cryptic comment that it might or might not be a serious business, and that some unspecified third person might or might not be present at the interview. It appeared, at any rate, to be of a nature which demanded discussion elsewhere than beneath his own roof; for his interview with Gore was to take place, not at Holden Lodge, but at a small roadside inn (after twenty years, Gore remembered the place distinctly) standing at a lonely cross-roads up on the Mendip, a good four miles from West Chuley, and a good deal further from anywhere else. Five o'clock on the afternoon of November 27th was the hour suggested by him. He would be hunting that afternoon; the meet would be at Shippen; he anticipated that the end of the run would leave him within easy reach of the "Bower of Bliss."

An offhand young gentleman, obviously very anxious that matters should be arranged to fit his own convenience accurately. So clearly so, that Gore was tempted to point out to him that five o'clock on an afternoon—probably wet—at the end of November was not a time at which he, personally, had any desire to find himself upon the Mendip, and to suggest that if Mr. Boyne had anything of the least importance to say, he should come up to London and say it. Reflecting, however, that he owed Mrs. Melhuish both a debt of gratitude for her commendations and a long-overdue visit, he denied himself the pleasure of withering rebuke to Mr. Boyne, and

drove down to Westmouth on November 25th in the teeth of a gale which lashed an icy sleet against his wind-screen all down the Bath Road. And in one of his pockets he carried with him a neatly-typed report admitting his complete failure, so far, to trace Pauline Brazil for Mr. James Stanton.

CHAPTER II

Mrs. Melhuish disclaimed all title to gratitude on Mr. Clive Boyne's account. She had never heard of that gentleman's existence until he had been introduced to her in the preceding week by her hostess at a dance in the neighborhood of Wraxton, and, as her brief conversation with him had dealt almost exclusively with the people present whom Mr. Boyne disliked—the majority of his fellow-guests, it seemed—she had found little opportunity or necessity to introduce any other topic. At the end of a fox-trot he had asked, casually:

"Oh, by the way, you know a chap called Gore, don't you?—fellow who does sort of private detective work and all that?"

Mrs. Melhuish had pleaded guilty to acquaintance with the Gore fellow, and had supplied his address. Mr. Boyne had then resumed his criticisms of his hostess's friends until he had drifted away in search of his next partner. He was, Mrs. Melhuish had since learned, a very well-to-do young man who lived with an invalid mother in a biggish house near West Chuley and spent his time amusing himself. His age she estimated at thirty or thereabouts; his family had apparently been settled in Somerset for some little time. Conceited, rather a bore, but extremely good-looking and an excellent dancer.

Mr. Boyne did not appear, by this illumination, in any degree more interesting. Gore transferred his enthusiasm for the time being to Pickles' new house and the son and heir who was his godson. It was in the tyrannous company of

this young gentleman, aged three years, nine months, and twenty-one days, that he paid a visit on the afternoon of the day following his arrival to the premises of Messrs. J. Stanton & Son, behind King Street, Linwood's central business thoroughfare. For the firm had always had a branch in Linwood, Westmouth's most important residential suburb, with storage warehouses attached. And there, the telephone had discovered, Mr. James Stanton was to be found that afternoon.

The premises occupied the entire length of two small side-streets running parallel to one another and at right angles to King Street. At either end a lane, cutting across the side-streets, bounded the narrow quadrilateral formed by the block of two-storied buildings, which thus stood island-like, cut off from the surrounding houses. At the end nearer to King Street, the furniture sales department, well equipped and smart with fresh paint and polished plate-glass, occupied the whole width from side-street to side-street. The rest of the building composed the storage premises, and presented, by contrast with the shop, an air of somewhat forlorn dinginess. Not a single window broke the long line of faded brick, the lower half of which was decorated with a procession of built-up arches, the upper with a series of grimy pilasters topped by elaborate capitals of fruit and flowers and improbable musical instruments.. For originally the place had been designed, by the forebear of the present Stanton, who had built it some time in the 'fifties, to form an arcade in which the shopping of Linwood—in those days more valuable in quality, if not in quantity, than in the decadent nineteen-twenties—should concentrate itself under select cover. But the project had fallen through; the arches through which Linwood's shoppers should have bustled in and out had been

bricked up; the arcade had become a furniture repository and had remained one ever since.

Inside, the space was divided by party walls into six long parallel alleys, connected by several cross passages. Along these "streets" of the arcade its shops still stood sadly, used now as cubicles for the storage of furniture. At half the height of the building galleries formed an upper series of storerooms. The architect—or perhaps the proprietor—had had the idea of ornamenting his handiwork lavishly with fretted wooden arches and arbors of Moorish design, some of which still remained intact, but most of which betrayed grievous wounds inflicted by the long passage of heavy goods. The height of each story was nearly double that of the ordinary modern dwelling-room. A glass roof, no doubt dim with the grime of years, alone admitted a wan, ghostly light which, insufficient in the upper story, left the lower in melancholy gloom.

Sad stuff, abandoned furniture, stacked up in those dark, silent cubicles. Here and there one caught sight of some poor, futile little belonging, once, perhaps, as much a part of some wanderer's life as his own nose, too useless to sell or give away, lying dusty and askew in a corner. A smell of fading books and rotting curtains and moldering carpets hung in the air. The sight of a flaxen-haired doll, leaking out its sawdust life from a large wound in its shoulder over a scattered bundle of unbound yellow numbers of *Punch,* filled even Master Simon Wyckham Melhuish with such dejection that he fell to silence until he reached the furniture-lift, which bore him to the upper floor. The pleasurable sensation of feeling that his tummick had been left behind restored him, however, to cheerfulness.

Up there they found Mr. James Stanton and his son Henry

in an apartment which was half office, half living-room. A littered roll-top desk faced a table laid—with exquisite Crown Derby—for tea; three ponderous safes lined one wall; a row of crowded bookcases another. Close to the letter-press in which a typist-clerk was copying some letters, a pair of ancient bedroom slippers lay higgledy-piggledy before the fire. For the elder Stanton, now for some time a widower, had converted some of the upper shops into a flat, and lived there, tended by a housekeeper. Though the bulk of his business was transacted at the premises down in the city, he preferred the amenities of Linwood. For that matter, his energetic attendance to his multifold interests kept him afoot from morning until night, a wanderer far afield. As he said himself, he had had no home since his wife's death and his surviving son's marriage; one might just as well save the expense of a house's upkeep and the trouble of servants; if one had a client in Taunton who wanted to be cremated, or a customer in Gloucester who wanted something special in the way of Waterford glass, one could reach him just as conveniently from Linwood as from the other side of the city.

"Besides," he explained, with a glance towards his books—mostly, as Gore perceived, works of local topography, archæology, and history—"I find I can work here, when I have a spare hour or so to do it, in peace and quietness. I like this old gazebo. I've always had a fancy for old, queer, musty places." He laughed. "Not a becoming confession for an up-to-date house agent and house-furnisher to make. But we all have odd bits in us—other people's remnants—the Lord knows whose. . . ."

He patted Simon Wyckham Melhuish's curly head. "Yes, young man. Some time or other your great-great-great-grandson will wonder why, though he's a general or a greengrocer

—you never know which he may be—what he's really happy doing is making pills." Mr. Stanton winked privily at Gore. "He'll never know that it will be because your daddy made them."

Simon Wyckham Melhuish's blue eyes clouded with regret.

"Daddy doesn't make pills," he murmured in objection clearly reproachful to Linwood's busiest medical practitioner. "He doesn't make anything."

"Don't you believe it, young man," smiled Mr. Stanton. "He makes pots. Every day and all day long, he makes pots and pots and pots. You ask him of what. Well, I hope his great-great-great-grandson will do the same—and mine." A gesture introduced the grave, pale young man who sat at the roll-top desk, checking invoices. "My son, Colonel. I lost the other one at Paschendaele."

Not precisely a chip of the old block, this sallow, uncertain-chinned young man. None of his father's hustle in the rather languid, weedy figure which, Gore observed, was clad according to the extremest sartorial ideals of 1928 in a purplish, tightly-waisted lounge suit of trying brevities and fullnesses, with tie, handkerchief, and socks precisely to match. "About time you got off to Bath, young man," suggested his elder, glancing at his watch. But Mr. Stanton, junior, disliked being bustled by his parent before customers. He paid no attention to the reminder beyond a vague smile, and continued to turn over his invoices. A moment or two later, however, he consulted his own watch with some little anxiety, rose, and began to invest himself with a smartly-cut overcoat of the same shade as his lounge suit.

"Sorry to have to tell you that we've drawn a blank so far, Mr. Stanton," Gore began, taking his typewritten report from his pocket. A wink and a slight shake of Mr. James

Stanton's silvery head checked further explanation and apology; Mr. Stanton, junior, then, was not aware of his parent's interest in his long-lost relative. His father took the report, glanced at it, returned it to its envelope and laid it on the top of the roll-top desk. "I didn't really expect anything else," he said, and turned briskly to another topic. "Where are you staying, Colonel?"

"At Dr. Melhuish's—until tomorrow afternoon. Tomorrow afternoon I'm going up to Chanton Mendip. After that—in all probability—back to Dr. Melhuish for a day or so."

"What do you think of Mrs. Melhuish's new house?"

"A great improvement on Selkirk Place. Much more cheerful."

"I've had my eye on that house for her for three years. What do *you* think of it, young man?"

But the son and heir of the house of Melhuish was not interested in it at that moment. He had strayed over to one of the big safes whose heavy door hung ajar, and was gazing into its crowded but neatly-arranged interior with absorption. A glass-covered case which lay in front, containing some rows of coins neatly arranged and labeled beneath, had aroused his particular interest.

"Wondering why I keep my money in a glass case?" smiled Mr. Stanton, taking forth his treasure to exhibit it to the youngster. He explained that the coins—many of which were Roman—had been found by him personally at different places in Somerset and Gloucestershire in the course of years of prying and poking about, as he described the favorite amusement of his brief holidays. With pride he displayed an aureus of Nero and a very beautiful gold medallion of Carausius found near Cirencester. When the contents of the case had been duly admired, he produced an oddly-shaped

gray earthen pot, as large as the bedroom ewer of modern usage and not unlike it in design, still filled with silver and bronze coins of the Cæsars from Allectus to Constantius the Second—the hoard, he surmised, of some paymaster of the early fourth century.

"You spoke of Chanton Mendip just now, Colonel," he said, as Gore examined this prize. "I found that little lot twenty-three years ago, not so far away from there—up near Black Chapel. The Romans mined lead up there for two or three hundred years, you know. Must have had a lot of men to pay. I came on that pot just under the turf, on a little flat plateau up above the remains of the workings. It seemed to me a likely place for an office of some sort to have been, so I had a go at it—and dug out that pot the second day. That's strictly between you and me, you know. Absolutely illegal, of course. I've often thought of running up there in my car some moonlight night, with three or four stout fellows with spades, and having another try. Many a night I've dreamed of finding a pot full to the neck with big golds. . . . So you're going up that way tomorrow. Rather funny. So am I. Got some stuff to take up to a house near Shippen. Have to go myself, I'm sorry to say."

He glanced towards the small solitary window which lighted the room—it lay at the extreme end of the long building, overlooking the lower lane—and which rattled incessantly beneath the assault of the wind. Yesterday's storm had been followed by a morning of comparative calm. But this afternoon the wind had risen again to half a gale, and was still rising. From a lowering leaden sky sleet showers fell at intervals. To Gore, too, the prospect of a journey to the top of Mendip seemed unalluring.

Mr. Stanton looked at his watch again. "Now then, now

then, my boy, you're going to be late for your appointment. Your collar is perfectly clean, and your face, I'm sorry to say, hasn't changed in the least since you looked at it ten minutes ago. Get off—get off."

His son, who had been surveying his reflection in a small mirror with solicitude, colored faintly at the blunt rebuke, lighted a cigarette, and strolled to the door. But there he paused and, retreating a little, held it open for the entry of two ladies, a smile of respectful pleasure animating his pale face. It was easy to divine the reason for his dilly-dallying. These callers had been expected. When they had entered he closed the door and came back a little way into the room, behind them.

Both were youthful, both of good looks beyond the ordinary. The younger, blonde, blue-eyed, made up after the mode of the moment, and wearing very handsome sables, took the lead. Her companion, a very beautiful young woman, of perhaps twenty-five—perhaps thirty—lingered behind a moment to exchange a smiling word with young Stanton. Seldom had Gore seen so lovely a pair of gray eyes or so expressive a pair, laughing roguishly between long black lashes, beneath long arched brows penciled after the fashion of those of *Keepsake* heroines of sixty years back. She, too, wore expensive furs; but her smartness of attire and her gay brightness of air were subdued a little to express the deference of a subordinate. A few moments informed Gore that the fair woman's name was Mrs. Tanquered, her companion's—horrible to relate—Miss Higgins, and that Miss Higgins occupied the post of secretary or companion to the blonde wearer of the sables.

James Stanton had thrust his head forward towards the

new visitors, lowering it to look at them over his glasses with twinkling intelligence.

"Come to bother you again, Mr. Stanton," said the foremost, in one of those hard, masculine voices which the young women of England appear to have developed within the past decade. "I'm sure you think me a frightful nuisance."

"Not at all, not at all, Mrs. Tanquered." Mr. Stanton placed a chair invitingly beside the roll-top desk. "Will you forgive me for a moment, Colonel . . . ?"

Gore deprecated apology by a smiling gesture, and retired to the window. Simon Wyckham Melhuish, however, attracted by the smile of the second young woman's gray eyes, had approached her and stood before her, twisting his fingers, breathing rather noisily, and eying her with the frankest of admiration. She laughed, and bent to hold out her hands to him.

"What a darling kiddy!"

"Another conquest, Miss Higgins," said James Stanton, urbanely.

The dark Miss Higgins laughed softly, and caressed the child's rosy cheeks as he told her his name and his age, with his wide eyes fixed upon her face unblinkingly. She glanced over his head towards Mrs. Tanquered. "Doesn't he remind you—just a little . . . ?"

She did not finish. But Mrs. Tanquered understood. Her smile had faded, and her face, a little heavy in repose and without the guard of a smile, was bent broodingly for a moment upon the boy's upraised profile. Then the gaze of both women went instinctively to the tall, soldierly figure silhouetted against the darkening window, appraised its owner approvingly, and returned to Mr. Stanton, senior. For Mr. Stanton, junior, there was plainly no possible excuse for

further delay. With a last glance towards the ladies—and a respectful "Good afternoon" of which Miss Higgins alone seemed aware, he departed.

"Well—as you see," resumed Mrs. Tanquered, "we haven't gone yet, Mr. Stanton. But we're still hoping to go."

"Not so much going, as going to go," Miss Higgins supplemented. No masculinity in that sweet, soft music. Miss Higgins, if Providence had given her an unlovely surname, and hands too large for an otherwise perfectly-fashioned and finished young woman, possessed a voice that, to use a phrase from the speech of the sister isle—which Gore suspected of being her native land—might have coaxed the birds off the bushes.

"We think, tomorrow," continued Mrs. Tanquered. "But we do *not* think, tomorrow morning. We think, in fact, tomorrow after lunch."

"Not *too* soon after lunch," stipulated Miss Higgins. "Please remember the doctor's orders. One hour's absolute repose after every meal."

"Well—suppose we get home by half-past three, Mr. Stanton? How would that suit you?"

"*Your* convenience is the one to be considered, Mrs. Tanqered. Half-past three will do very well. There is not a great deal to be done, after all. You wish to see the stuff unpacked personally?"

"Oh yes!" Mrs. Tanquered was definite upon that point. "I must be there to show you where I want the things put. I explained that before, didn't I?"

"Yes, yes," agreed Mr. Stanton, to whom, plainly, that and everything else had been explained quite sufficiently before.

"And, of course, you will go up with the things, personally?"

"Yes. We shall be there, all ready to unload, by half-past three, Mrs. Tanquered. Do take a seat, Miss Higgins, won't you? Not a very luxurious one, I'm afraid. . . ."

His gesture offered her the only other chair available, that which stood before the roll-top desk. Perhaps, despite his silver locks, Mr. Stanton's self-possession was a little flurried by these two ornamental young creatures of the opposite sex. Always a little restless of movement, he had fidgeted incessantly since their entry, moving now towards them, now retreating. He had picked up the envelope containing Gore's report from the top of the roll-top desk, fidgeted with the envelope, taken the report from it, glanced at it abstractedly, twiddled it between his fingers while he listened to Mrs. Tanquered's remarks, thrown it down on the table of the desk as he invited Miss Higgins to seat herself. That done, he fidgeted away to a safe, closed its door, apologized again to Gore for delaying him, and fidgeted back towards the ladies. Simon Wyckham Melhuish was seated now on Miss Higgins's knees, exhibiting to her his dearest treasure—a red-and-blue pencil.

"There will probably be some things to bring back," Mrs. Tanquered continued. "You will be able to do that? Not a great many things——"

"To go to the flat?" Mr. Stanton inquired.

"Some of them. The rest to come into store here with you."

"I see." Mr. Stanton fidgeted over to the typist, signed a letter for her after a perusal of its contents, and fidgeted back. His back was turned for perhaps a minute. But during those sixty seconds Mrs. Tanquered's eyes had fallen on the typewritten report lying open on the roll-top desk, and had remained fastened on it with a stare of such concentration

that the attention of her companion was attracted first to her, then to the paper at which she was looking so intently. Both profiles were presented to Gore, and the light of the room was poor. But it was impossible to mistake the absorption of the two pairs of eyes, or the effort which Mrs. Tanquered's at any rate, made to decipher the body of the report. Sitting four feet or thereabouts from the desk, Gore guessed, only the heading of the report—in capitals throughout—could have been clearly visible to her. She leaned forward a little, then, remembering herself, sat back again, glancing towards Gore quickly. Mr. Stanton, too, as he left his typist's table, saw that little movement, but evinced no interest in it then.

"About that fire-escape, Mrs. Tanquered? Have you decided to have it erected?"

The conversation which ensued explained that which had gone before. Mrs. Tanquered, it seemed, had owned a large house in Linwood, in addition to the house on the Mendip which was the actual place of residence of herself and her husband. A large house in Linwood had become unnecessary; she had decided to sell it, through Messrs. Stanton & Son, and, since she desired to retain a *pied-à-terre* there, rent a flat. Of the furniture of the house, part had been transferred to the flat, part to storage at Messrs. Stanton's, part—comprising some specially valuable articles—was to be moved up to her Mendip house next day. She revealed herself as a rather fussy, disconnected, anxious-minded young woman, concerned about details to which Mr. Stanton and his staff were doubtless accustomed to attend every day as matters of routine. Her latest anxiety had been the provision of a means of escape from her first-floor flat in the event of fire—an event which she appeared to anticipate as of the most probable imminence. An outside fire-escape must be put up—at once.

Mr. Stanton would please have the matter put in hand without delay—that afternoon, preferably.

Mr. Stanton switched on the light that hung above the roll-top desk as the visitors rose to depart, and for a moment or two Mrs. Tanquered lingered, apparently concerned with the contents of her bag, that perpetual feminine solicitude. The light hung directly above her cloche now and its shadow hid her downbent face. But Gore had no doubt whatever that, coolly and deliberately, she had made herself mistress of the contents of his report before, at length, she found two keys in her bag, restored them to it, snapped its catch, and raised her face to lay a last injunction upon Mr. Stanton.

"And for Heaven's sake, Mr. Stanton, ask the men not to come into the house with muddy boots. If you only knew how impossible it is to keep servants in an out-of-the-way place like Chanton Mendip. If I ask a housemaid to fill an extra jug with water, she gives notice. . . . The men will remember, won't they?" She bent a last brooding gaze upon Simon Wyckham Melhuish, who, having consented to be kissed by Miss Higgins, was now rather pink of cheek and visibly smitten with misgivings as to the manliness of that surrender. "A pretty kid," she commented with hard curtness, showed two rows of excellent teeth in Gore's direction—a vague tribute to his suspected paternity, perhaps—and went away. From the door her companion's lovely gray eyes smiled back a last farewell to the child. He stood stockstill for a long time after the door had closed behind her, breathing hard. Clearly Simon Wyckham was badly hit. So badly that he had forgotten temporarily the existence of the most wonderful godfather in the world.

"Sorry to have kept you, Colonel," Mr. Stanton apologized once more. "But I wanted just a word with you—after my

son had gone." He dismissed the typist genially. "I thought you would have known Mrs. Tanquered. She's the Honorable Mrs. Greston's daughter, you know."

Gore had not known that, though he recalled Mrs. Greston well enough from the old days—the owner of Wraxton Court, one of the "show" places of North Somerset, and the present life interest in the Brendon money. A great deal of money. The Hon. Mrs. Greston was quite a nice person to be daughter to. But the daughter was a growth later than the "old days." He recalled that there had been a son.

"Died four or five years ago," Mr. Stanton told him. "A charming fellow. Left a child, but the child died two years ago—a tragedy also. Mrs. Tanquered will come in for the place and the money when her mother goes. She won't have long to wait, from what I hear. Mrs. Greston has been in very poor health for years. A charming woman—the son was *her* son. His father was a bad hat, you may remember. She divorced him just before the war."

In ten minutes from that moment Gore and his godson were to meet Mrs. Melhuish at the Berkeley, which was just ten minutes distant from Mr. Stanton's office. At the moment he was not interested particularly in Mrs. Tanquered's family history or, indeed, in anything else connected with her, save the coincidence that Chanton Mendip, where she lived, lay at no great distance from the place of his appointment for the following afternoon. Simon Wyckham was bored a little now. His godfather gathered up his hat and stick.

"I needn't say that we haven't abandoned all hope, Mr. Stanton. We have a most persevering person still on the trail of Pauline Brazil—among others. Some day, no doubt, we'll run her down . . . or her epitaph. You think she is still living?"

Mr. Stanton had no idea. Pauline Stanton would be a woman of sixty-seven now, if she were still alive. He appeared to think that an inscription on a gravestone would be the most probable result—if any—of the attempt to trace her. He picked up the report and read it through again. "May be able to start from the other end, perhaps," he suggested. "Work backwards. That's why I asked whether you would remain in this neighborhood for any little time. In the course of the next couple of weeks I may possibly be able to give you something more to go on. In any case, thank you very much, Colonel, for the trouble you've taken. Good-by. Good-by, young man."

Downstairs the gloom had thickened, and the erstwhile shops were dark, threatening caverns as Simon Wyckham and his godfather walked between two long rows of them towards a distant light that guided them to the rear of the sales department. Simon Wyckham, evidently aware of other activities of Mr. Stanton's, cast a look backwards into the shadows as they reached that more cheerful illumination.

"Is this where Mr. Stanton brings the coffins?" he asked. But his thoughts strayed to brighter things quickly. "Who was that lady?"

There had clearly been, for him, but one lady in Mr. Stanton's office.

"That, Simon," replied his godfather, "was a lady called Higgins. I should forget that, if I were you. But the rest of her is quite worth remembering. We won't tell mummy . . . but I was rather taken with her myself."

CHAPTER III

A CHIMNEY-POT belonging to the house next door crashed into Dr. Melhuish's area that night. When Gore's Buick, bound down the Bridgwater road, showed her nose over the top of Ashminster Down about three o'clock on the following afternoon, the gale that met her slewed her bodily across the slimy tarmac and spun her round with her bonnet turned towards Westmouth again. The furious night had done plenty of damage, Gore noted along the way; telegraph wires were swinging; fences down; every second field had its fallen tree. But it was not until, leaving the main road a little short of Stoneford, he climbed the long gully of Blackberrow Coombe and came out upon the exposed plateau of the Mendip, that the ruthless work of the southwester revealed itself fully. At the head of the coombe he passed the tragic ruin of a belt of pinewood, laid low as by one sweep of a mighty scythe, the red shields of their upturned roots arranged in a neat row half a mile long. Near the turning to Black Chapel a wooden shelter had been carried a furlong across a plowed field and wedged between two beeches, fifteen feet above the ground. The road was strewn densely with branches large and small, hurtled down from the groaning trees whose boughs swayed and tossed wildly as if in torment. Once or twice one of these flying missiles struck the hood of the Buick with a resounding thump. The air was filled with a whooping, screaming, untiring clamor that, even within the shelter of the car, imparted a sensation of breathlessness. Still rising, that implacable note. The night

that was coming, it seemed, would be no improvement upon the day that was already ending.

Along the five miles from the coombe-head to his destination he saw no living thing. The wide expanses of upland ran off on either side of the road to a sky of sooty gray, swept bare. Not a solitary sheep; even the stoats were indoors this afternoon. Insensibly the colorless desolation of sky and earth depressed him a little, and it was with relief that he swung the Buick into the recessed bay before the "Bower of Bliss" and found himself for the moment in shelter and comparative silence.

Not that the exterior of the Bower of Bliss was alluring, or, indeed, in any smallest degree inviting. An English roadside inn, however small and however disappointing within, usually contrives to show a face sufficiently attractive beyond its surroundings to attract at least the eye of the possible customer. But this one might easily have been passed unseen, so completely had its crude ugliness of design and the dingy tones of its bricks and tiles subdued themselves in long years of neglect to the neutral coloring of its background. The clump of beeches behind it thrust out flanking arms that overshadowed it and hid it from the wayfarer until he had all but passed its low, narrow door. Two-storied, and of considerable frontage, with a medley of decayed outbuildings huddling beneath the trees at the rear, it looked what it had been for a century and a half, a mere place of call for wagoners, farm laborers, and the like, too far from better cheer. Four roads branched before it; but no other traveler had, it seemed, any use for any of them today.

An almost illegible sign informed the world that Luke Chrisson was the proprietor of this unprosperous-looking establishment. And in response to Gore's thrice-repeated

jangling of a decrepit bell, in the dark entrance passage that individual appeared in person, and in silence surveyed the visitor unencouragingly. If it was some time since he had washed and shaved and changed the shirt whose sleeves were rolled up on two grimy, muscular arms, he had at least been sampling his own beer comparatively recently and with appreciation. He was both odorous and half-fuddled, and, it seemed, quite at a loss to understand why the owner of a motor-car, with the ability to go elsewhere, should desire the use of a sitting-room in his inn for an hour or so from half-past four onwards. A slatternly girl assisted open-mouthed at the interview, which, however, terminated in the exhibition of a bare, dusty apartment facing the taproom across the passage, furnished with three dilapidated cane-bottomed chairs, a rickety, swipes-stained table, a disemboweled sofa, and two fly-blown hunting-prints of the 1840's. Here, it was arranged, the guest might receive the gentleman who would call to see him, and here, at half-past four, he could have a cup of tea. His car would be quite safe where it stood.

These negotiations concluded, Gore was standing in the doorway, lighting a pipe and wondering how the ensuing half-hour might be filled, when a mounted groom came trotting down the road and pulled up before him, eying him with respectful surmise.

"Excuse me, sir, but would you happen to be the gentleman what's expecting Mr. Boyne?"

Upon Gore's affirmative, he explained that he was Mr. Boyne's groom, that Mr. Boyne had just changed over to his second horse up at Winyer's Barrow, and was afraid that he should be unable to reach the Bower of Bliss until well after five, as hounds were heading south, away from the inn.

A pretty cool hand, Mr. Boyne, Gore reflected again; but

it was natural enough that he should desire to see the afternoon's run to a finish. When the messenger had clattered off again in the direction from which he had come, Gore turned up his coat collar, jammed down his hat, and followed along the road until his guide took to the fields and disappeared. Gore, too, left the road presently, and made his way up the steep, uneven grass slopes towards a shaft-stack, the forlorn relic of abandoned enterprise, which formed a landmark on the highest point in view. From there he would probably have a view of the field.

But before he had climbed halfway to this objective, a little clump of mounted figures bobbed up into view against the skyline close beside it, and after a brief halt descended the slope towards the road, bearing away from him somewhat to eastward, no doubt to take advantage of the easier fall of the ground there. Others followed, black shuttlecocks blown over the crest of the ridge and swept down the hill like birds scattered before the wind, carried, it seemed, rather by its violence than by any motion of their own. Following the gestures of the foremost, Gore made out at length in the failing light a little moving trail of white-speckled blurs crawling across a slope far away beyond the road to eastward.

But as he seated himself with caution on a rather insecure stone wall to watch the progress of the field towards a pack obviously lost and just rediscovered, a faint clamor, rising to a petulant crescendo, turned his eyes back to the road itself at the point towards which the descending horsemen were converging. Another portion of the pack, probably in pursuit of a fox of its own, came into sight there, straggled in whimpering quest for a while, then, bursting into joyous music, crossed the wall bounding the road and made off to northwards. Neither huntsman nor whip appeared. The field,

after brief consultation, divided according to individual preference, the greater number preferring to attempt to rejoin the more distant but more authentic portion of the pack to eastward.

The gale blew two more horsemen over the skyline, but nearer along the ridge, to Gore's side of the stack. These two more adventurous spirits disdained to turn aside for the sake of an easier descent, it seemed. Side by side they hurtled down the steep slope directly towards Gore, visibly taking the shortest route towards the portion of the pack which had just crossed the road. Instinctively he cast a glance downwards over the ground which fell away from the wall upon which he sat, and, perceiving that the approaching horses galloped neck to neck, almost stirrup to stirrup, foresaw instantly the probability of catastrophe for one if not for both.

The four-foot barrier of loose stones on which he sat formed one of those long straggling boundaries usual on the Mendip, this particular specimen inclosing the desolate stretch of rough ground, some ten or twelve acres in area, which he had crossed in his climb from the road. There, as over large portions of the surrounding landscape, the remains of the old lead-workings lay covered by a scrubby turf, like some heavily-shelled battlefield over whose scars and gashes had grown the grass of forgetfulness. Deeply pocked, this sloping eiderdown of potholes and miniature ravines, in places twenty to thirty feet in depth, was separated by narrow upstanding ledges and ridges. Of these latter survivals of the higher level, but one actually touched the boundary wall, the path along which Gore had reached it. Elsewhere, for a distance of some hundreds of yards on either side, there was a sheer drop, the turf being cut away sharply a bare couple of feet from the wall's foundations. On the narrow raised ridge one

horse might find a safe landing, with luck; two abreast would certainly not. Gore, whose feet dangled just above its junction with the wall, dropped to the ground quickly and waved a warning.

Neither horseman paid the slightest attention to his signal, however. Still level, still boot to boot, they came on without a check, one, older, brown-faced and thick-set, on a big-boned chestnut, the other pale, blond, and slight of build, mounted on a rakish bay. The latter, at a distance of some fifty yards or so from Gore and the wall, appeared to realize the trouble that lay just ahead, for he called out to his companion:

"Look out, Tanquered!"

The words, drawled with a carelessness that belied the look of apprehension in the younger man's face, came down to Gore on the wind. He saw the man on the chestnut turn his head and show his teeth in a grin of derision, and then, deliberately, swing the weight of his heavier mount obliquely across the bay's shoulders. Ridden off the one safe landing-place, the other might yet, perhaps, have avoided disaster. But he made no slightest effort to pull up, nor, as it seemed, to gather his horse for the steep fall which he must have known now lay beyond the wall. The bay rocketed into the air, swerved in fright as it did so, and pitched forward and downward out of sight. Before the chestnut, landing like a bird on the narrow causeway, was halfway down to the road —its rider, save for a cursory, amused glance over his shoulder, betrayed no interest in his companion's misfortune—Gore had swung himself over the wall and clambered down into the hollow where, the bay, with a broken leg, struggled to rise, whinnying in fear. A few feet from its thrashing irons lay its rider, crumpled up like a hedgehog and ominously

still, his bowler hat forced ludicrously down over the head that was half-tucked beneath his body.

At first glance the certainty seemed a broken neck. But he was still alive, bleeding hard from an ugly gash on his golden head—a good-looking young fellow, still in his twenties, probably. Gore's efforts to bring him to failing absolutely, he made his way down to the road, where he was fortunate enough to intercept some belated members of the hunt. These sportsmen, mostly young farmers, collected a couple of hurdles from a sheep-pen, and hurried to the aid of the injured man. The first of them who saw his blood-dabbled face gave him his name.

"Oh—it's Boyne."

"Oh," said another.

Just that. The fact that "it was Boyne" had clearly deprived the incident of a considerable degree of its interest.

A stoutish, cheerful man wearing the hunt coat cocked an eye up at the wall.

"What the devil made him do a dam' silly thing like that? Don't mind about his skull, but that mare's for the kennels."

Gore's audience listened with a revived attention to the guarded account which he gave them of the accident. Certain as he felt personally that the man on the chestnut had deliberately ridden Boyne off at the last moment, that, obviously, was not a belief to be broadcasted. But his description of the older man set the eyes of the farmers exchanging unspoken comment, and their lips atwist.

"Tanquered, eh?" said one. "That's funny. Carried on, did he? Tickled to death, I shouldn't be surprised, to see his friend Mr. Boyne come a cropper. Well—if you ride for it, you'll get it all right."

The others laughed, then concerned themselves with the

business of hoisting Boyne on to the improvised hurdle. He remained unconscious, his heart beating almost imperceptibly. No interview at the Bower of Bliss this afternoon, then. None the less, it was to the Bower of Bliss that he was carried, and on the dingy mattress of one of its unmade beds that—much against the surly Chrisson's will—he was laid. The inn was not on the telephone. In the sitting-room, by the light of an evil-smelling oil-lamp, consultation was held as to the means of communicating with the injured man's household and with a doctor.

CHAPTER IV

At the table, which had been covered with a stained cloth and laid for two, a youngish man in a suit of plus-fours was consuming a meal of tea and eggs. That he had come from London that day, that he had previously visited the inn, and that his name was Burgin, emerged from the scraps of conversation which he exchanged with Chrisson. The sportsmen, gathered by the newly-lighted fire, returned his "good afternoon" coldly and turned their backs upon him. His shrewd eyes rested on Gore with a faint curiosity—perhaps merely the curiosity natural in regard to a fellow-guest. Then he returned to his eggs with concentration.

The nearest telephone, it transpired, was that at Danmore Lodge, Tanquered's house, a little over a mile away by the shortest route across country, nearly two by road. But the stout, cheerful man vetoed at once the suggestion that this particular telephone should be used, and, grinning sardonically, the others agreed.

"If it was to ring up an undertaker," laughed one, "Tanquered wouldn't mind paying *that* call."

Shippen lay something over three miles away. But plainly none of the five Nimrods desired to end a disappointing day's sport by a jog of six miles for Mr. Boyne's sake. They had lost five foxes and killed none; it had been a job to keep one's saddle most of the day. They were tired and stiff and bored by the necessity of doing anything for anyone. For some minutes they forgot Boyne altogether. Dusk was deepening fast to darkness. Outside, the jaded horses stood clus-

tered, tail to wind, tied to a fence. Occasionally at the sound of a raised voice a reproachful head turned towards the windows of the sitting-room.

There was the Sanatorium, with, presumably, a doctor and a telephone, four miles off, in the opposite direction to Shippen. But none of the five would take his homeward road that way. The man in the hunt coat, preoccupied from the first by the prospect of a twenty-mile drive along roads bordered by trees which he considered highly likely to fall upon him, said at length:

"Well, you won't mind if I get off. Wife'll be worrying. . . ."

He got on his horse and disappeared in search of the car which, apparently, was waiting for him somewhere. With his departure opinion as to the propriety of using the Danmore Lodge telephone veered about sharply.

"Tanquered won't have got home yet," one of the farmers urged.

"His missus is away in Westmouth," another said in support. "It'll be all right."

For a while they debated as to which of their number should discharge a duty which each perceived clearly his companions were shirking. From argument, paying no heed to Gore's offer of the use of his car, they passed to reproaches. But when, after a visit to Boyne's bedside, he came downstairs again, they were swilling beer in reconciliation and discussing market prices. Perceiving how matters stood, he got into the Buick and set out for Black Chapel, Mr. Burgin, who had finished tea, volunteering to keep an eye to the casualty upstairs from time to time, until the arrival of a doctor. For at that moment it was Gore's intention, having called at the Sanatorium, to continue his way to Westmouth

and pass the night in his comfortable bedroom at the Melhuishes'. But that proved a somewhat optimistic anticipation.

A quarter of a mile from the inn his headlights fell upon the only wayfarer he was to encounter along the way, a tall, heavily-built man carrying a small suitcase, and moving at a surprisingly sharp pace against the hurricane wind. He raised his head as he met the car. Gore smiled, observing that the beard and mustache and whiskers which framed his tanned face were blown back into a flat halo. He was to meet their owner again.

Another quarter of a mile on, his progress was hopelessly blocked by two old beeches, prostrate side by side across the road. No way round the obstacle, possible for a car, revealed itself after twenty minutes' reconnoitering of hedges and ditches and stone walls. He turned about and made for Shippen, perceiving, as he passed the inn, that the horses had disappeared and that the bearded pedestrian with the suitcase had taken shelter beneath its roof. He was visible for a moment in the sitting-room, his face raised to the oil-lamp, which he was endeavoring evidently to persuade to improved illumination.

From Shippen, Gore called up first the Sanatorium. But of its two resident physicians, one was down with influenza, the other gone to Westmouth to convoy back a patient. The nurse who answered the 'phone gave him the names of a couple of doctors, one resident at West Chuley, the other at Stoneford. But the Chuleys had both been cut off telephonically for some hours, he found; he was obliged to content himself with a promise from the Stoneford man's wife that he would come up to the Bower of Bliss as soon as possible. But that, she conveyed, would probably not be for a couple of hours to come.

He drove back to the inn, to deliver this message, wondering a little, now, whether he should dine that evening. His belief—an accurate diagnosis, as it proved—was that Boyne's injury was probably concussion of the brain, in which case there was little to be done, even by a doctor, except to keep him warm. But for various reasons Gore felt disinclined, now, to abandon this unlucky and, it seemed, unpopular client of his, at all events until he had seen him safely in medical care. For that matter, he had begun already to envisage the possibility of spending the night at the inn. His way to that spare bedroom in Victoria Square, by Blackberrow Coombe, at any rate, was certainly barred for the night; it was on the cards that every road in the neighborhood was at that moment blocked in several places by fallen trees. The beds of the Bower of Bliss had not appeared seductive; but there was the consoling fact that, as always, a small *attaché* case in the back of the Buick contained shaving-tackle and a pair of slippers.

Night had fallen on Mendip now, black and hostile. The inn was a vague, dark blur beneath the beeches that whistled and threshed lugubriously. Two small yellow rectangles of light cut themselves out of the gloom; the blinds of the sitting-room had been pulled down. An instinct which he did not define to himself, perhaps, induced Gore, when he had switched off his lights, to stand for a moment or two in the darkness, looking at the place. A queer-looking place, somehow . . . queer not merely by reason of its loneliness or the squat vague huddle of its outline, crouched beneath the savage onslaught of the gale.

Well, some tea of any sort would be agreeable. He pushed open the narrow front door, and collided with Mr. James Stanton.

CHAPTER V

For Gore the meeting was no surprise. Since the Tanquereds' house lay but a mile away, he had divined that Mr. Stanton, homeward bound with his lorry or lorries, would pass the inn some time that afternoon. At sight of him, his first thought was that the lorries would find some difficulty in getting back to Westmouth that night.

"Hullo, Mr. Stanton! Pleasant sort of evening, isn't it? Getting back? You'll have to cut out Blackberrow if that's the way you thought of going. Two big fellows down across the road a little way along."

The little man, recovered from the unexpectedness of the *rencontre,* had continued to survey Gore with that smile of somewhat enigmatic amusement which perhaps expressed his habitual attitude towards disappointment.

"Big fellows down everywhere, I'm sorry to say. So I hear. We can't go by the Chuleys. We can't go by Blackberrow. We can't get to the Wells Road. We can't get round by Black Chapel. So here we are . . . and here we're stopping—for tonight. My son's coming along with the lorry. I'm waiting for him now. . . . How are you getting back?"

"I'm not," Gore replied, succinctly.

"Oh," commented Mr. Stanton. His gaze dwelt on Gore speculatively for a moment. "Yes. We started late. We were delayed for an hour on the way down—mag. trouble. It took Mrs. Tanquered an hour and a half to decide where she wanted the new stuff to go and what old stuff she wanted

taken away. Don't know what that son of mine's going to say when he sees his quarters for the night. And I know he hasn't brought a hot-water bottle along." He laughed sardonically and turned his ear to the swish of tires outside the door. "Here they come."

Chrisson appeared at that moment at the inner end of the passage, carrying a tray, and while Gore ordered tea and inquired how Boyne was, Mr. Stanton lingered beside him.

"No better nor no worse, las' time I seen him," grunted the landlord. "When are they going to take him out of this? That's what I want to know. This isn't a blooming 'orspital."

"We can't reach his house on the telephone," Gore explained. "You'll have to send a messenger of some sort. In any case, he can't be moved until a doctor sees him."

Chrisson shrugged. "When's the doctor coming?"

"As soon as possible."

The landlord muttered something and went on his way into the sitting-room with his tray. Gore and Stanton turned towards the opening front door, exchanging a smile on the score of Chrisson's surliness, and saw, silhouetted against the lights of a two-seater standing before the door, two furred feminine silhouettes, which paused at sight of them.

"Why," said Mr. Stanton, "it's Mrs. Tanquered!"

"Oh, Mr. Stanton," exclaimed a voice which Gore recognized, "is it true? Is Mr. Boyne here? Is he badly injured? Major Lumley called and left word with my maid that Mr. Boyne had been thrown and seriously hurt, and the idiot of a girl didn't tell us until a quarter of an hour afterwards. . . . Have they got a doctor?"

Mr. Stanton referred her, with a gesture, to Gore, who answered her questions as reassuringly as possible. It was

to be supposed, from her solicitude, either that Boyne was a relative of hers or possessed some even more intimate interest. A possible explanation of the young farmer's sardonic amusement concerning the circumstances of his accident suggested itself. Mrs. Tanquered had moved along the passage now, so that the light issuing through the open sitting-room door fell upon her face, too. It was a serious, concerned face—the face of a woman who, for the moment, finds but one thing in the world of importance.

"Where is he?" she asked. "I must see him." She turned to her companion. "Switch off the car, Gretta, will you."

Gore ushered them up the narrow, twisting stairs into the chill, draughty darkness of the corridors above, and opened the door of the room where Boyne lay. Mr. Burgin had kept his promise. He was sitting by the just-lighted fire, smoking a pipe, and reading a sporting newspaper by the light of a candle. Gore's eye noted the gesture of feminine eagerness with which Mrs. Tanquered's hands caught the limp ones which lay upon the blankets. Their coldness alarmed her. She bent to peer into Boyne's face.

"My God!" she whimpered. "He's not—he's not dead!"

Miss Higgins drew her away, laid a hand upon a wrist, pulled up an eyelid. The calm, dexterous movements proclaimed experience. She covered up the patient when she had examined his head by the light of the candle.

"Concussion, I think," she said, quietly. "He'll want some hot-water bottles. Shall I run back to the house in the car and get them?"

Mrs. Tanquered nodded. "Will you, Gretta?"

As the two men descended the stairs with Miss Higgins, her own words confirmed Gore's surmise. She had had several years' experience as a professional nurse at St. Waldo's,

where for a time she had been theater-sister. At the front door, she turned to Burgin, whom, clearly, she had met before.

"Are you going up to see Mr. Tanquered this evening? I can give you a lift up now, if you are."

"Not just yet, Miss Higgins, thanks. Later on. If you see Mr. Tanquered, just say I'll be up round eight, please."

Having attended upon Miss Higgins's departure with *empressement,* Burgin came back into the hall.

"Hell of a night, what?" He weighed up Gore with his shrewd eyes again before he ventured upon a confidence. "Suppose Mrs. T. is safe up there without a chaperon, eh? Got the wind up about her white-headed boy, hasn't she?" He grinned. "Wonder if her dear hubby knows she's rushed off down here." Burgin's smile transformed his shrewdness to cunning, his alertness of air to a knowing spryness. Not a solicitor's clerk—not a bookmaker's clerk, Gore thought—a bit better than that—with a pleasant, good-humored voice. But his eyes and mouth were, on close inspection, plain signals for any wise man. His head was capable of turning further and more quickly than Gore had seen a head turn for some time. Powerful sloping shoulders—large head—small nose—lightly built from the waist down. Probably a useful puncher; one of his ears had been in serious trouble at some time.

Well—he had volunteered to keep an eye to Boyne. . . . No need to snub him.

"The gentleman upstairs is a particular friend of Mrs. Tanquered's?"

Burgin inhaled exhaustively and pursed thin lips.

"Ye-es. The mutt. Serve him dam' well right if his neck *is* broken. Don't think it is, though. I had a look. Oh

yes. Mister Clive Boyne is the cuckoo in the nest. You don't belong around here, then, sir?"

Gore smiled suavely as he shook his head and, turning, entered the sitting-room, where Mr. James Stanton now sat at the table awaiting his son's coming to share the tea which had already been laid for two. Burgin followed, glanced at Stanton, and bade him good evening civilly. Then his eyes passed on to the burly figure by the fire, and Gore saw them narrow themselves. For an instant he presented precisely the effect of the cat who has just seen the dog from next door waiting for her under the wall. But only for an instant. He continued on his way to the fire, seated himself, drew his newspaper from his pocket, and bade the burly man also a polite "good evening," to which the latter—the sturdy pedestrian whom Gore had passed along the road—responded with amiability.

Seen by the light of the lamp to which his face had turned for a moment, the fourth occupant of the room was a hale, robust man in his middle fifties. His rather slow, cultured voice held the lecture-room's note of deliberate precision; a leonine chevelure of graying hair and a large pair of tortoise-shell spectacles accentuated the professorial effect. He smiled agreeably across the room at Gore as he inquired what fortune had attended his attempt to reach a doctor. He himself had come across from the Sanatorium, where he had been to see his nephew, who was a patient there. He had counted something close on twenty trees down along the road to the inn.

Chrisson lurched in and laid a pot of tea, half a loaf, and a large lump of butter before Gore. In response to an inquiry as to whether he had a room for the night, he said, unwillingly, that he had a room.

"Can you manage anything for dinner?"

"Dinner?" The landlord was amused. He scratched himself extensively until his amusement had exhausted itself. "No. You can't have no dinner, 'cause there ain't none."

He was induced, however, to disclose that he had bacon and eggs and bread and cheese in sufficient abundance. There were only two pairs of sheets. Those that weren't particular could do with blankets; those that were could go somewhere else. Having endeavored unsuccessfully to think of some other disadvantage connected with a night spent under the roof of the "Bower of Bliss," he withdrew to the door.

"I'll tell you what I have, though," he volunteered. "I've got some of the finest whisky ever ye drank in your life if ye care to pay for it."

There was a murmur of applause at the suggestion, and his face brightened a little as he disappeared. The turmoil without, the sudden leap of the fire as the man with the beard stirred it with his boot, the very deficiencies of the commissariat, lent to the adventure a certain cheerfulness and comfort of its own. Upon Mr. Stanton's suggestion, some of the whisky was brought in, and pronounced excellent. The four men sat before the fire, smoking and chatting, pausing now and then to listen to the crash of a bough upon the roof of an outhouse, or the slither of a tile above their heads.

The bearded man's name was, it seemed, Cowlishaw—Dr. Cowlishaw, D. Sc., as he explained, not . . . unfortunately for Mr. Boyne upstairs . . . M.D. He had gone up to the Sanatorium from Westmouth that afternoon, he said, and found his nephew in the middle of a bad attack of hemorrhage. He had, accordingly, abandoned his design of returning to Westmouth and London that night, and had decided to remain at all events until next day in the neighborhood

of the Sanatorium. The people there had suggested that the Bower of Bliss might be able to put him up for the night.

Although he had never visited the Mendip country before, he knew all about its geology and its prehistoric biology. Mr. Stanton forgot all about his overdue lorry in the interest of the conversation, and had finished his second jorum—a pretty stiff one, Gore noticed—when his son presented himself. The lorry had refused to start; this time the magneto trouble was beyond remedy. Miss Higgins had very kindly arranged that the driver and his mate should be fed and accommodated for the night at Danmore Lodge, and had given the younger Stanton a lift down to the inn.

His parent winked at Gore as the young man left the room to assist Miss Higgins to carry upstairs the paraphernalia with which she had returned.

"If he was as good a judge of table legs as he is of the kind that wear silk stockings," he twinkled naughtily, "I might retire and settle down to finding that pot of big golds. A very pretty young woman, Miss Higgins, Colonel, don't you think?"

"Extremely so," Gore agreed. "Also very much on the spot."

Burgin looked up from his newspaper.

"Irish, isn't she?"

Mr. James Stanton's second jorum had somewhat accentuated the enigmatic quality of his smile. He appeared to be weighing the wisdom of a third.

"You think so, sir? Well, some good things come from Ireland—in bottles and out of them though I prefer Scotch myself. But, as it happens, Miss Higgins isn't one of them. English as her own name, she tells me; and *that's* plain English enough."

"Curious," said Gore. "I was rather under the impression, also, that she was Irish. Those gray eyes put in with a smutty finger . . ."

"Now, now, Colonel," laughed Mr. Stanton, in reproof. "At your age, too. . . ." He looked up as his son re-entered the room, his pale face disturbed by a frown. "What's the trouble now, my boy? Seen your bed?"

"Oh, only that lout of a landlord making himself objectionable," replied the younger Stanton, pouring himself out a cup of tepid tea, tasting it, and rejecting it with scorn. "Hogwash! However, I soon shut him up."

"Stout fellow," approved his father, sardonically.

"The fellow's half-screwed, I believe. He was most impertinent to Mrs. Tanquered. Just because she wanted a couple of hot-water bottles filled."

"Tut, tut! Still, it gave you an opportunity of making yourself useful and agreeable to the ladies. Try this whisky, my boy. I can recommend it for ruffled plumes."

Burgin dropped his newspaper to his knees.

"No love lost between our friend Chrisson and the Tanquereds, you know."

Young Stanton turned to the speaker.

"No? How's that?"

"Oh, well, there was some trouble a couple of years ago. Chrisson had a brother who used to help him run this place, I believe, at that time. The brother was a bit queer—got a bang on the head during the war, or something of the sort. Quite harmless most times, but liable to throw his weight about when he got excited or had too much beer on board."

"This fellow," commented Mr. Stanton, with a movement of his head towards his host's supposed whereabouts, "has a queer look in his eye. A lot of the folk up here have it.

These Mendip people have intermarried for centuries. . . . Neolithic head——"

"Anyhow," Burgin continued, "one fine day he stopped Mrs. Tanquered somewhere along the road near here and frightened her. He'd done that sort of thing before once or twice with other people. So Tanquered got busy, and the upshot was that the silly blighter was shut up in a lunatic asylum and has remained there ever since. At least, that's the story I've heard. I know Chrisson hates Tanquered like poison, anyhow. Pretty nervy of Mrs. T. to come here. Chrisson's an ugly customer to fall foul of."

James Stanton had decided upon a third whisky.

"There was something more than that, though, behind their shutting the fellow up, I think, sir," he said, uncorking the depleted bottle.

"You mean—about that poor kid?" Burgin replied, sharply. "Oh, there was nothing in that, was there?"

Mr. Stanton completed the manufacture of his drink, and turned towards Gore.

"You remember, Colonel, I told you yesterday that Mrs. Greston—that's Mrs. Tanquered's mother—lost her grandchild a couple of years ago—her son's child. Quite a kiddy, poor little chap. Not more than three or four years of age. A fine little fellow, I believe. His father died four or five years ago, so he would have come in for the property, of course, if he had lived. But he didn't."

"You told me there had been a tragedy . . . ?"

"Yes. Quite a tragic business. It happened this way. Mr. Tanquered had got up a load of gravel for his drive—or his garden walks. I'm not sure which. Anyhow, the cart with the gravel in it was left standing in the stable-yard, resting on its shafts. There was a piece of rope dangling from the

tail-board, and the child was seen several times playing near the cart and swinging from the rope. No one stopped him, because no one thought it possible that he could tilt the cart backwards. But somehow or other the cart *was* tilted backwards one morning. The tail-board fell out, and the whole load of gravel fell on the child and suffocated it. He lay under the gravel for over an hour before anyone thought of looking for him there."

"They said the poor kid's hands had got tangled in the rope, and that he couldn't use them to work his way out," Burgin commented.

Mr. Stanton nodded. "So they said. Well, this Chrisson fellow was certainly in the stable-yard that morning. He was seen—by one of the maids, I think—hanging about, while the child was playing near the cart—not very long before it was found dead. I believe the story he told, himself, was that he was waiting about to borrow some embrocation from one of the grooms for a sprained elbow, and that when he found that they had all gone to the meet that morning, he had looked round the harness-room, had failed to find the bottle, and had gone away, leaving the child still playing. However, there was a good deal of talk, and they arrested him. He'd been in trouble with Mr. Tanquered a short time before. Mr. Tanquered had left his car outside this inn here, one morning he was shooting round here, and this Chrisson fellow thought he'd like to try the car along the road. He'd been in the M. T. during the war, and had a mania for motors and everything connected with them. He got the car going at about fifty miles an hour, lost control of it, and ran it into a ditch and smashed it up. Tanquered, naturally enough, was greatly annoyed, when he arrived on the scene, and kicked him out of the ditch and into it again."

"Well, well," urged Burgin, "I expect the beggar thought himself lucky to get off so lightly. He wouldn't have tipped a load of gravel over a child, just because its father had kicked his behind for smashing up his car."

"Perhaps not," agreed James Stanton. "I suppose the police thought so. Anyhow, they released him, and nothing more came of the talk."

"For that matter," argued Burgin, "he couldn't have done Tanquered a better turn, if he wanted to."

Dr. Cowlishaw turned from his contemplation of the fire's blaze.

"Mr. Tanquered will come in for the estate and the money now when Mrs. Greston dies?"

"His wife will," corrected Burgin, his shrewd eyes taking stock of Cowlishaw from his square boot-toes to his flowing mane.

"Same thing."

"Perhaps not quite," smiled Mr. Stanton. He consulted his watch. "Half-past six. I wonder if the doctor *will* get here to-night. Hardly, I expect—unless he walks."

Burgin rose, stretched, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"Anyone feel like bridge? I've got some cards in my bag . . ."

This proposal having been hailed with acclamation, the four older men seated themselves at the cleared table, Henry Stanton disappearing for a prolonged period and returning at length to absorb himself in the cross-word puzzle in Burgin's paper.

A little before eight the doctor arrived, on the carrier of a motor-cycle ridden by his dispenser. Only with the greatest difficulty had he contrived to reach the inn, the heavy machine

having been lifted over countless trees. There was nothing for him to do save to confirm Miss Higgins' diagnosis, approve what had been done, counsel absolute quiet, and depart again into the howling darkness.

"Got to chloroform two dogs at East Chuley," he smiled, as he restrapped his case to the carrier. "Bitten by rats. Two Cairns, belonging to old Lady Humbolt. . . . After that, a confinement at Redhill, and a cheery little case of spotted fever near Stoneford. . . . Nothing like variety. Good night."

At half-past eight the elder Stanton went in search of his bacon and eggs. He found Chrisson blind drunk in the tap, with an empty whisky bottle beside him. The blowsy girl had disappeared—gone home, apparently. Resigning themselves to the inevitable, the party foraged for bread and cheese, raided the woodhouse, built up a roaring fire, and resumed their game.

Towards nine the younger Stanton went off to bed. Ten minutes later a peremptory hammering upon the front door disturbed the players. As it appeared unlikely that Chrisson would hear anything until next day, Gore rose and unlocked and unbolted the door. A thick-set figure in a Burberry pushed into the unlighted passage.

"Chrisson about?" demanded a curt voice.

"Asleep in the tap," Gore replied. "Drunk."

"Oh. My name's Tanquered. Know if my wife's here?"

"I believe so."

"Where is she?"

"Upstairs."

Burgin had come out of the sitting-room. He struck a match, and for a moment its flame illuminated his face and, less distinctly, that of the new arrival. A very displeased face Mr. Tanquered's, just then.

"H'lo, Tanquered!" said Burgin. "Rotten sort of night, isn't it, what? Yes, your wife's upstairs, looking after Boyne."

"What the devil brings *you* here?" Tanquered asked, angrily.

The match went out. As Gore returned to the sitting-room he heard Tanquered go up the uncarpeted stairs.

"Don't be so damned unfriendly," said Burgin's voice. "It won't do, you know, old chap. . . . All right. I'll see you when you come down."

The ascending feet went on up the stairs, tramped along the passage above, then halted abruptly. Burgin came back into the sitting-room, smiling sardonically.

"Trouble for Mrs. T., I rather fancy. Master Louis Tanquered is in a nasty temper. Mind if we chuck, gentlemen?"

Gore and Cowlishaw had each won five shillings; they did not mind. Mr. Stanton was sleepy; he did not mind. They stood about the fire, chatting desultorily for a while. The incessant uproar of the wind had produced in all of them a lassitude that clogged their tongues. They were speculating as to the chances of breakfast next morning, when young Stanton, half dressed and divided emotionally between uneasiness and a desire to conceal it, appeared in the doorway.

"What's all that going on outside?" he asked, vaguely and of no one in particular, his eyes turned towards the rattling window, whose blinds swayed in the draught.

"All what?" inquired his father through a yawn.

"All those fellows dodging round the house? Haven't you heard them? They've been at it for the last half-hour. Giggling and chattering like monkeys. There's a whole crowd of them——"

The elder Stanton cocked an eyebrow.

"Cheese never did agree with you, my boy, late at night."

"Rot!" snapped his son. "I tell you I saw them. Running backwards and forwards round the house. I saw them distinctly from my bedroom. There! Listen! Now do you hear them?"

Upstairs voices were raised in angry argument. But above their muffled drone and the wailing tumult of the wind, an odd, furtive little sound came in to the listening ears in the sitting-room. Certainly it resembled a giggle—a number of giggles—stifled and mischievous. Feet were shuffling and pattering stealthily in front of the house, close to the windows.

"Sounds like an animal of some sort," said Cowlishaw. "A fox, perhaps. Let us see."

He rose and, going to the window, raised the blind. As he bent forward to peer out, a hoarse, wavering cheer broke the silence. The front door was burst open, and the narrow entrance-passage was filled with hubbub of squealing laughter and trampling feet. As the occupants of the sitting-room turned in surprise towards this irruption, a little mob of black-clad figures surged in through its door a little way, cackling and jabbering excitedly, halted in an irresolute huddle, and fell to silence.

It was difficult to say precisely how many the intruders were. But the foremost half-dozen who blocked the door were certainly backed by as many more. The first impression produced upon Gore was that of a curious ludicrous uniformity in their clothes; all wore badly-fitting suits of hard, shiny black and bowler hats in almost every case too large or too small for the wearer. They had at once the effect of some grotesque chorus of burlesque and of a phalanx of funeral mutes. Burgin laughed aloud at sight of them.

But his laughter checked itself as he stared at the faces

hidden in the shadows beneath the absurd, narrow-brimmed little pot-hats.

Never had Gore, at least, looked upon such a collection of dismaying travesties of the human visage. Every distortion, every ugliness and degradation of feature that nightmare imagination could invent, was exhibited there as if in a gallery of monstrosities. Mouths and noses and chins and ears awry, exaggerated or still more disconcertingly undeveloped, placed at random as if by some caricaturist experimenting in facial horror. The eyes that stared in curiosity into the room were appalling—the malevolence of some that displayed a warped intelligence less terrible than the vacant, animal glare of the greater number. Those eyes obliterated the absurdity of their garb; as they stood clustered there, peering loose-mouthed and suspicious, they had the air of lost souls strayed in out of the storm whose blast, swirling in through the open front door, all but extinguished the lamp.

Burgin sprang to his feet.

"Loonies, by God!" he ejaculated. Then, to cover the startled movement, he stuck his fingers in his ears and twisted them. "Bogey! Bogey!" he piped in ludicrous falsetto, advancing towards them.

At the movement the black-clad figures surged backwards, and with cries of alarm and anger fled out of sight. Their scampering feet were heard rushing along the tiled passage towards the back of the house and trampling up the stairs. Again that hollow travesty of a cheer broke out. A hoarse voice cried, "This way. Up here . . ." The feet raced along the passage overhead.

"Loonies," repeated Burgin. "Escaped loonies. That's what they are." He looked round for confirmation. "What?"

"Looks like it," James Stanton agreed. "Hope they won't frighten the ladies."

"We had better see that they don't," Gore suggested.

Followed by Burgin, with Henry Stanton a little in the rear, he ran up the stairs hurriedly, hoping to cut off the invaders from Boyne's room. But they had already found it—attracted, no doubt, by the sole light on the upper floor. As the rescue party reached the top of the stairs, they caught sight of a furious *mêlée* illumined by the dim light from an open door.

In the central figure round which the struggle swayed and eddied, Gore recognised Tanquered. Manifestly an excellent boxer, with a punch of tremendous force, he was dealing with his half-dozen opponents with a cool adroitness that held an element of comedy in its deliberate precision. One rushing black figure after another was selected and sent reeling against a wall or stretched upon the floor of the passage. Three of his assailants made a combined attack from behind and succeeded in dragging him to his knees for a moment. But he shook them off, rose to his feet, and aiming a savage kick at the man nearest to him, laid him prostrate in screaming agony. Infuriated by the sound, the remainder of the pack hurled themselves upon him and pulled him down again. He was hidden beneath a mewing medley of black-clothed limbs when the intervention of Gore and Burgin sent his opponents scampering in panic along the passage. Without a word to his rescuers, Tanquered rose and rushed in pursuit, swearing with viciousness under his breath. At the further end of the passage another staircase apparently led down to the ground-floor level, no doubt to the kitchen. Down this the chase clattered, invisible in the blind darkness beyond the light of the open bedroom door.

Neither Mrs. Tanquered nor Miss Higgins had appeared while the battle had waged outside the door. As the sounds of the fray died away—it seemed that Tanquered had pursued the enemy into the yard at the back of the inn—Miss Higgins came to the door, carrying a candle. Her calm, long-lashed eyes surveyed the three men who faced her and the moaning one at her feet. She bent down quickly, so that the light fell on the contorted face.

"Why, this is Chrisson's brother!" she said, quietly.

Burgin was interested. He, too, bent to look.

"By Jove! I believe you're right, Miss Higgins. He's dash like Chrisson, anyhow. How the deuce . . . ?"

But Miss Higgins was not interested in speculations as to the explanation of Chrisson's brother's presence. She asked that he might be taken somewhere else, and the three men carried him downstairs and put him in a chair in the tap, beside his supposed brother, and, finding the key in the door, locked them both in there. That done, they returned to the sitting-room, where they found Cowlishaw still staring at the fire and Mr. James Stanton pouring himself out another whisky.

CHAPTER VI

"Alarums and excursions," smiled Mr. Stanton. "Have you taken a prisoner—or has Mrs. Tanquered retired to the safety of the tap? We heard you locking some one in there, didn't we?"

Burgin nodded.

"A casualty."

"Curiously enough," added Gore, "the casualty appears to be the gentleman whom you were talking about this evening—the other Chrisson."

Mr. Stanton had undoubtedly now reached a frame of mind beyond surprise. But he was interested. He contemplated Gore through his spectacles gravely, and then over them. Finally he tilted them up above his eyebrows and turned to Burgin.

"Then you must be right, sir. These poor creatures have escaped from an asylum." He reflected. "I believe there's one at Winsham. That would be the nearest one." He re-corked the whisky bottle and carried his drink to a seat by the fire to consider this information at his ease. "Well, well! . . . A very curious thing. What's become of the rest of them?"

"Bunked off, apparently—by the back door," answered Burgin. "Tanquered's gone after them."

The sound of a door slamming towards the rear of the house, and the shooting of bolts, took him out into the passage.

"Good hunting?" he called out, jocularly.

There was no reply, and after some moments he returned to the sitting-room.

"He's come in again," he announced. "So they haven't scragged him. I thought they might have. Gone up to resume his tête-à-tête with Mrs. T. Wonder if there are any of the beggars in the house still."

Borrowing the lamp, which had begun to flicker ominously, Gore and he made a tour of inspection through the rabbit-warren of moldily-smelling rooms on the lower floor. They found, however, no trace of the intruders save an abandoned bowler hat, and were returning towards the sitting-room when the sound of Mrs. Tanquered's voice reached them from upstairs.

"I shall stay here."

"You will not stay here," said Tanquered's voice, curtly. "You will come back to the house with me—now."

"I will not."

"You will. Put on this coat. At once."

"Don't bully her," protested Miss Higgins. "We'll go back presently."

"I will not go back to the house tonight," repeated Mrs. Tanquered. "I shall stay here until the doctor comes to-morrow. If you want to go, Gretta, go."

"My dear, you can't stay here alone. Don't be absurd. Where on earth do you propose to sleep?"

"I don't propose to sleep. There's no use in glaring at me, Louis. I've told you that I intend to stay—and I shall stay. Don't let us have one of your scenes, please."

"Very well," said Tanquered, after a moment. "If you stay here, I shall stay here, that's all."

"As you please," returned his wife. "Only, for Heaven's sake don't make a row here in this room. Your friend, Mr.

Burgin, is downstairs. No doubt he'll be delighted to see you."

The banal little dispute ended there, as, from the voices of the disputants, it could be divined a thousand such ungraceful discussions had ended. Presumably Mrs. Tanquered went back into Boyne's room; for some moments her husband and Miss Higgins talked in an undertone at the head of the stairs.

Gore had set down the lamp upon a shelf beside the taproom door and had been examining it dubiously. As Tanquered came down the stairs, it flared once or twice convulsively and went out.

"That's that," remarked Burgin. "Wonder where the oil's kept. In the yard, probably."

"Perhaps," suggested a silvery voice from above, "you could find some candles. Ours is on its last legs."

"Righto, Miss Higgins. I'll have a look round."

They unlocked the taproom door. Chrisson still lay asleep, open-mouthed, on the bench against the wall. But the whisky bottle had disappeared. So had the casualty. A brief investigation revealed an open window in a little cubbyhole opening off the tap, used for storing empties. That way, it was clear, the younger Chrisson had made his exit, probably to rejoin his friends.

For some moments they endeavored without success to arouse the sleeper. Then Tanquered, who had passed in behind the counter, found there a bucket filled with dirty water, probably used for washing glasses. This he emptied without ceremony over Chrisson's touseled head.

The result was startling in its promptness. The sleeper opened bleared eyes that filled with murderous fury as they fell on Tanquered's contemptuously smiling face. He sprang

up with a snarl and hurled himself at his awakener, his long arms thrashing like flails. Tanquered stepped back coolly, hit him with both hands, and sent him reeling back against the bench, on which he collapsed limply.

"Keep your dirty paws to yourself, you damned fool," he said brutally. "Here . . . we want some light. Oil. Pull yourself together or I'll put you under your pump and sober you."

Dazed and gasping, water dripping from every angle of his heavy face, Chrisson glared mutely at him like a cornered wild beast. Hardly normal, even when sober, Gore surmised; full of whisky, a very unalluring spectacle. He said nothing, made no attempt to renew his attack on Tanquered. But behind his low forehead his dazed wits were striving clumsily for some plan of revenge. Tanquered laughed, and put the thoughts of the others into words.

"Thinking you'd like to stick a knife in me, are you, you beauty? I shouldn't try it. Where do you keep your candles?"

Burgin, however, had been exploring and had found behind the counter both a packet of candles and a can of lamp-oil. Tanquered, exploring also, possessed himself of two bottles of Hennessy's brandy and a glass, and threw a note on the bench beside Chrisson, whose eyes had never left him. They debated a little as to whether they should lock the landlord up in his own taproom again, but contented themselves in the end with extinguishing the lamp that hung from the low blackened ceiling.

"He'll fall asleep again in half a jiff," said Burgin. "Pity you woke him up, Tanquered."

Tanquered showed his teeth in a grin.

"Nervous?" He waved his bottles. "Some of this will cure you. Get yourself a glass. You too, Mr. . . . ?"

"My name's Gore."

"Oh—Gore, is it? Well, you'll join us, Mr. Gore, eh? We'll make a night of it. Who the hell could sleep with a wind like that? Anyhow, I expect the beds are swarming with fleas."

Gore smiled soothingly as he declined politely the invitation to make a night of it. But Tanquered chose to take his refusal in bad part, turned on his heel, and strode out into the passage, where he collided with Mr. James Stanton and his son groping their way in the darkness to the stairs. One of the bottles escaped from his hand and smashed on the flags. He swore angrily.

"Blast you, whoever you are! Can't you mind where you're going?"

Mr. Stanton apologized somewhat frigidly.

"My dear sir, I might very well ask the same question of you. It's Mr. Tanquered, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is."

"There is no necessity to lose your temper over a pure accident, Mr. Tanquered. I'm extremely sorry—but it was a pure accident."

"Oh, it's you, is it?" growled Tanquered. "And half-cocked, by God! Here. Who the devil told you to take that furniture out of my house?"

"If you refer to the furniture removed by Mrs. Tanquered's instructions ——"

"Instructions be damned. *I'm* the person to give instructions. Just you put that stuff back tomorrow morning where you took it from. Understand?"

Burgin had refilled and relighted the lamp now, and as he

turned up the wick Mr. James Stanton was revealed, still smiling enigmatically beneath Tanquered's angry stare.

"Understand?" repeated the latter, and strode into the sitting-room. Mr. Stanton, having said that he would attend to the matter in the morning, went up the stairs slowly but with dignity. He paused twice to wish everyone below good night, and disappeared by instalments, still smiling sardonically. His son, following behind, urged him onwards rather peevishly.

"You getting off?" Burgin asked, as, carrying the lamp, he turned towards the sitting-room door. In there, against the blaze of the fire, Tanquered's figure was visible, standing close to the chair in which Dr. Cowlishaw had sat motionless during the events of the past half-hour.

Gore nodded. "You're sitting up?"

"For a while," replied Burgin. He extracted four candles from the packet, and added them to that which he had already handed Gore. "Mind giving these to Miss Higgins as you pass? Thanks. Good night."

He turned again and entered the sitting-room. As the light of the lamp reached the two men by the fire, Gore saw Cowlishaw's bearded profile raise itself slowly towards Tanquered's face. He removed his pipe from his mouth and took off his spectacles.

"Well, Brazil," he said, with a curious deliberation, "do you remember me?"

Burgin, without turning, reached a hand behind him and shut the door, very quickly.

Earlier in the evening Gore had visited the yard, in search of cover for his car, but, on reflection, since no single door of any of the numerous outbuildings possessed a key, had

decided to leave it in front of the inn, in sight from his bedroom window. In view of possible shortcomings in the Bower of Bliss bed furniture, he went out now and provided himself with a car rug. Mrs. Tanquered's two-seater stood before the door, its side-lights still on. He decided to switch them off for her; it was unlikely that even the most unfortunate of policemen would find himself in the neighborhood of the inn on such a night.

Some one, however, was out there in the howling darkness, close to the decrepit gate leading into the yard, at the side of the house. A foot stumbled over a stone. Probably the unfortunate creatures who had fled before Tanquered had crept back to the yard for shelter. There was a key in the front door; Gore locked and bolted it and, picking up his supply of candles, went upstairs.

Up there the elder Stanton was still bidding Miss Higgins and Mrs. Tanquered good night gallantly. He waved an airy hand as Gore appeared.

"Explain whole matter in the morning to Mr. Tanquered. Obvious misunderstanding. Too late to go into it tonight. Good night. Good night."

Miss Higgins's laughing gray eyes followed his dignified and careful retreat until he disappeared into the bedroom at the extreme end of the passage.

"Naughty old man," she smiled, demurely. "I hope you haven't been encouraging him to take more than is good for him. By the way, Colonel Gore, this is our second meeting, isn't it? That was your charming little boy who made such friends with me yesterday afternoon?"

"My godson—Dr. Melhuish's property, really. How is the patient?"

"Easier, I think. His pulse is stronger. I have been trying

to persuade Mrs. Tanquered to go home and leave me here in charge. But she is a dreadfully obstinate person. I see you have brought us some candles. That is very sweet of you. Are you staying here tonight, also?"

"Hobson's choice. I understand all roads to Westmouth are blocked. I've switched off your lights, by the way. Anything else you want?"

"I don't think so, thanks."

A most remarkably lovely young woman, Miss Higgins. Every perfection of feature and coloring—the subtlest play of expression—an absolute lack of self-consciousness. By candlelight there was but one word for her gay charm—bewitching. What a pity that Providence has given her such ugly hands—stub-fingered, coarse-skinned, much too large. . . .

Mrs. Tanquered, who had retreated into the bedroom, returned to the door.

"You mentioned Dr. Melhuish's name. I know it, of course, very well. Please don't think it idiotic curiosity—but there was a Colonel Gore, I seem to remember, who had something to do with something or other queer that happened to Dr. Melhuish or to one of his patients—a few years ago.[1] I'm hideously vague about it. . . ."

"One of his patients."

"Was it some one called Barrington?"

"Quite right."

"He was found dead—in a car—outside Dr. Melhuish's house, wasn't he?"

"That is so."

"I was at school at the time. But I just remember hearing about it. Though I haven't the faintest recollection as to how you were mixed up in it."

[1] See *The Deductions of Colonel Gore.*

"But Colonel Gore is always getting mixed up in things of that sort." Miss Higgins smiled. "So Mr. Stanton told us."

"Rather too long a story to inflict on you at this hour, Mrs. Tanquered. Won't you be persuaded to take Miss Higgins's advice and go home to bed? I promise faithfully to look after Mr. Boyne. There's really nothing much one can do for him, you know."

She considered him with her pretty, rather prominent blue eyes—eyes that had a trick of wavering and returning to the charge with an effort.

"Has my husband sent you to try to persuade me to go home?" she asked, with a curious childlike bluntness.

"No, no. I've merely taken the liberty of suggesting the obviously sensible and comfortable thing."

She shook her head.

"It's very kind of you. But, no. I shall stay here until the doctor comes in the morning. Good night."

"Good night. I am in the cross passage—first door on the right—if you want anything."

Something amiss with Mrs. Tanquered, Gore decided as he undressed. Nerves. An odd look in her eyes, that—for a good-looking young woman with the prospect of fifty thousand a year or so and one of Somerset's show places ahead of her. Probably the loss of her nephew had set things ajangle. No doubt, too, the somewhat startling reappearance of the younger Chrisson tonight had recalled that tragedy. . . .

Brazil. . . . There could be no doubt that that was the name by which Cowlishaw had addressed Tanquered. A curious coincidence. Gore fell asleep wondering what Mr. Stanton would think of it.

Afterwards he was unable to recall that he himself had

thought anything of it except that it was an odd coincidence. Not a very usual name, Brazil—rather an unusual one. And why should Cowlishaw, or anyone else, address a man whose name was Tanquered as Brazil?

For a little while the window rattled and the old house shook. But only for a very little while. Presently from Mr. James Stanton's apartment round the corner a sonorous snore rose to blend itself with the roar of the wind. But Gore did not hear it.

A little after two o'clock, however, he *did* hear a curious sound proceeding from Mr. James Stanton's room, though the first impression of his consciousness was that Boyne was moaning. But when he had huddled on some clothes and gone out into the passage to listen, he found that this impression had been a mistaken one. The sound came from the other end of the main passage. He recalled Mr. Stanton's four large whiskies and concluded that that gentleman, asleep or awake, was not feeling happy about them at the moment.

He tapped at the door of the end bedroom. There was no reply save the dolorous sound from within. Not snoring, precisely; not precisely groaning, a combination of the two. He opened the door and put his head into the room and sniffed. The window was wide open, despite the blast that came in through it. But even in that cold freshness there was perceptible a faint, sickish odor.

He lighted the candle beside the bed. Mr. James Stanton lay on his back, his face blue-white, his bloodshot eyes staring. His nose had been bleeding; his lips and chin and the bedclothes were stained. Gore bent down over him and sniffed again, shook him vigorously without appreciable result,

lighted a cigarette, and considered him thoughtfully for some moments.

Ultimately he decided to try the application of cold water. But there was none in the cracked jug that graced the apology for a wash-stand. He took the jug and went along the passage to the head of the stairs, passing Boyne's room, from which no sound came, though a faint line of light showed beneath the door. There was a faint light in the passage downstairs also, he saw. Perhaps Mr. Tanquered was still making a night of it with Mr. Burgin.

The door of the sitting-room was partially closed; the front door was open. Before shutting the latter, he looked out. Mrs. Tanquered's two-seater had disappeared. And so, to his surprise, had his own Buick.

Having expressed the emotions aroused by this discovery succinctly, he turned and pushed open the door of the sitting-room. At first he believed the room empty. The light of two candles, standing in pools of their own grease on the table, interfered with his view of the dimness beyond them. But a step to one side revealed the elder Chrisson on his knees near the fireplace, staring at him with startled, stupid eyes. One hand held the jagged ruin of a bottle; both hands and both bare arms were daubed with blood.

"What the devil . . . ?" began Gore. Then, as he passed the table, he saw Tanquered lying on the floor in its shadow.

A fragment of broken glass crackled sharply beneath his foot. The floor, he saw, was strewn with splinters.

Chrisson grinned idiotically.

"D—— quiet, ain't he, guv'nor? Not dead, is he?"

He struggled to his feet as Gore pushed back the table and held a candle down to the face upturned to the ceiling.

"I never done it, guv'nor. Don't you go for to say I done it!"

CHAPTER VII

Inspector Shadgold of the Somerset constabulary, who, some five hours later, took charge of the inquiry into the circumstances attending Louis Tanquered's death, was an extremely intelligent, efficient, and courteous officer. Confronted with an occurrence utterly unlike any with which he had had to deal in his seventeen years of service, he displayed an admirable placidity, an equally admirable desire to cause no unnecessary inconvenience to anyone, and a still more commendable caution in forming his conclusions as to the perpetrator, the motive, and the manner of the crime. A stalwart, active man in his middle forties, with a clean-cut, bronzed face, steady blue eyes, and a touch of western softness in his pleasant voice. He had had a distinguished war record, and had received a commission and a D. S. O. for specially gallant conduct during the break-through in March, 1918.

He, too, arrived at the inn on the carrier of a motor-cycle and found the Shippen constable, who had reached the Bower of Bliss a couple of hours earlier, seated in the kitchen, keeping an unobtrusive eye upon Luke Chrisson, who was cooking rashers for his remaining guests' breakfast. The landlord had washed and tidied himself somewhat, but was still stupid from the effects of his orgy of the night. Since the arrival of the constable, summoned by the younger Stanton, he had not opened his lips. But few people could resist Inspector Shadgold's smile.

"Well, Mr. Chrisson," said the inspector, casually, "you've had some trouble up here, I'm sorry to hear. I'd like to hear

from *you* first what has happened. Go on with your cooking. Don't let me disturb you. The live must be fed, if the dead have no appetite."

Chrisson threw a glance at him out of the corners of bleared, doubting eyes.

"I've nothing to tell you. I know nothing about it. I found the man lying on the floor over there in the sitting-room, same as he's lying there now, with a broken bottle lying beside him. That's all I know about it."

"What time was that, Mr. Chrisson?"

"I don't know what time it was. Early in the morning. I didn't look to see what time it was."

"About two o'clock, was it?"

"It might have been."

"As late as three o'clock?"

"It might have been. I tell you I didn't look to see."

"We'll, we'll split the difference. You went into the sitting-room, say at half-past two or thereabouts, and there you saw a man lying on the floor, with a broken bottle beside him? You recognized him?"

"Yes. It was Mr. Tanquered."

"You knew Mr. Tanquered well by appearance?"

"Oh yes, I knew him well—too well."

"Was he dead, now, Mr. Chrisson, when you found him?"

"I don't know. Anyhow, he was lying there."

"What did you think? Did you think he was drunk—or just asleep—or what?"

"I thought he was drunk."

"Did you try to arouse him?"

"I don't know now rightly what I did. I was drunk myself, that's the truth. I don't remember, except seeing him

lying there with his head cut open and the bottle beside him."

"But I suppose you tried to lift him up off the floor, eh?"

"I don't remember. I may have."

"Where had you been just before you went into the sitting-room?"

"In the tap."

"At half-past two in the morning? What were you doing in the tap at that hour?"

"That's my business. I tell you I was drunk."

"Why did you leave the tap and go into the sitting-room?"

"I don't know. I don't remember why I went."

"Did you know Mr. Tanquered was in there?"

"No. I didn't know he was still in the house."

"But you know that he had been in the house—you had seen him in it, hadn't you—before that?"

"Seen him? The b—— threw a bucket of water over me and beat me with his fists when I was asleep and too much drink in me to know what I was doing. If I hadn't been drunk ——"

"When was that, Mr. Chrisson?"

"A while before that. I don't know how long. I was asleep again after that. And then I woke up and went over into the sitting-room."

"Were you alone in the tap when you woke up?"

"There was no one else there with me. I was in the dark, asleep."

"And then you woke up. Heard a noise, perhaps?"

"No, I heard no noise."

"Just woke up and went across into the sitting-room. Was there anyone else besides Mr. Tanquered in the sitting-room when you went into it?"

"No."

"Only Mr. Tanquered lying on the floor? Was there a light in the sitting-room when you went into it?"

"No. I don't remember rightly whether there was or not. No—there wasn't. I struck a match and lighted the candles on the table."

"You were able to do that? Now, between ourselves, how much had you drunk, Mr. Chrisson?"

"Best part of a quart of whisky. I was drunk before I took the whisky."

"How long were you in the sitting-room with Mr. Tanquered before anyone else went in there?"

"I couldn't say. Not long."

"Five minutes?"

"Longer nor that. Ten minutes, maybe."

"Then some one else came into the room. Who?"

"One of the gentlemen that slept here. I don't know his name. The tall one with the eyeglass."

The Shippen constable supplied the name: "Colonel Gore, Inspector."

"Colonel Gore came into the sitting-room. What were you doing when he came in?"

"Doing? Nothing."

"Just standing there, looking at Mr. Tanquered?"

"Yes. I didn't know what was the matter with him."

"Before Colonel Gore came, had you heard any noise about the house?"

"I don't remember."

"Any noise outside?"

"No. I don't remember."

"I see those rashers are done. Where are you serving breakfast?"

"In the tap."

"I see. Well, better serve it, Mr. Chrisson. You'll find us in the sitting-room when you've done that."

The inspector viewed the calm, misty freshness of the morning through the kitchen window with approval until Chrisson had left the room.

"You had a busy night, Bunter, I hear," he said, genially, turning to his subordinate. "What time did you hear about this affair?"

The constable, a portly, paternal man, who had been stationed at Shippen for many years and was genuinely shocked by the tragedy which had disturbed the law-abiding peace of his province, made a concise report with the aid of his notebook.

"At 3:37 A.M. I returned to the station, having completed my patrol to the Wells road. I found there Mr. Henry Stanton, waiting for me. He informed me that Mr. Tanquered had been found dead in the sitting-room of the Bower of Bliss inn. Having dispatched a messenger on a bicycle to the station at Harford Gurney, I proceeded at once in Mr. Stanton's company to the inn. There I found the deceased lying on the floor of the sitting-room, dead. I informed the following persons, then at the inn, that they must remain there until further notice: Luke Chrisson, the licensee; James and Henry Stanton, Westmouth, furniture-dealers; Dr. William Cowlishaw, Royal College of Geology and Mineralogy, London; Lieutenant-Colonel Wyckham Gore, Rye House, Norfolk St., Strand, London. I locked up the sitting-room without disturbing anything. Shortly after, a man from West Chuley, named Godden, arrived at the inn. He informed me that a Buick motor-car, XZ 4779, had been found overturned near a fallen tree on Sallow Hill, about a mile and a quarter from

the inn, and that a man who was believed to be Simon Chrisson, brother to Luke Chrisson, had been found under it and taken to the house of Mr. Harry Hawkes at the bottom of the hill, where he had died. Having been informed by Colonel Gore that his car had been removed from the front of the inn during the night and obtained a description of same, I proceeded to the scene of the accident. The car lay upside down across the road, partly resting on the fallen tree. I identified it as Colonel Gore's car from his description and the registration number. I then proceeded to Mr. Hawkes's house, where I found a man lying dead. Mr. Hawkes stated that he was the man found under the car. I identified him as Simon Chrisson from my own knowledge. His head was badly injured; he smelled strongly of spirits. I directed that a doctor should be sent for to see the corpse as soon as possible, with a view to ascertaining the cause of death, and that he should come on up to the Bower of Bliss after doing so. I then returned to the inn. The doctor has not yet arrived here."

"Did Simon Chrisson reside here with his brother?"

"Yes, until December two years ago. Not since that. Owing to complaints as to his conduct, he was arrested on a charge of assaulting Mrs. Tanquered."

The inspector pursed his lips.

"Assaulting Mrs. Tanquered, eh?"

"The charge was dropped, as he was certified insane and committed to Winsham Lunatic Asylum. I have no information as yet how he came to be at large. But I heard at Mr. Hawkes's house that some men had been seen early this morning running across the fields towards West Chuley, shouting and waving their arms, and that it was believed they were lunatics by their behavior."

The inspector looked across the road at a telegraph-post meditatively.

"Wires all down up here, I hear. Well, we'll look into that. By the way, our friend here has put on a clean shirt this morning, hasn't he—and his Sunday trousers?"

Bunter unrolled a neat brown-paper parcel and returned to his notebook.

"On my return to the inn I perceived that Luke Chrisson had changed his clothes. I requested him to give me the clothes which he had taken off. They are in this parcel, *viz.*, a shirt, a cardigan, a pair of cord breeches, and a pair of leather leggings. All of them are stained with blood. At that time I noticed on his boots at the toes stains which I also took to be bloodstains. I have since seen him wiping them off. This parcel also contains the cloth with which he wiped them off."

"Have you taken any statements?"

"No. I thought it better a senior officer should do so. I have heard in a general way what the others had to say. Three people who also stayed at the inn last night had left before I reached here. Their names are Vera Tanquered, wife of the deceased; Gretta Higgins, companion to Mrs. Tanquered, both resident at Danmore Lodge, Chanton Mendip; and Burgin, Christian names unknown, address and occupation unknown, stated to be a friend of the deceased.

Inspector Shadgold's left eye, unsurprised by improbable and abruptly departing guests alike, winked warningly as Chrisson returned with an empty tray.

"Well, Mr. Chrisson, shall we have a look at the chamber of horrors, eh?"

The sitting-room lay still in twilight, for the blinds had been left by the careful Bunter as he had found them. A whiff of fustiness, in which mingled a more sinister breath than that

of stale tobacco and spirits, met them at the door. The inspector with careful fingers pulled up the blinds and let daylight in upon the dingy scene of the tragedy.

Chrisson hung back, unwilling to pass the table, it seemed, until the inspector had made his preliminary inspection. Asked to indicate where he had stood in the room, he advanced with reluctance and pointed vaguely to the area between the fireplace and the prostrate figure beside the table.

"I stood here," he said. He stooped to pick up a broken bottle which lay at his feet, but Bunter's hand caught his arm quickly.

"We mustn't touch anything just yet, Mr. Chrisson, you know," the inspector explained, soothingly. "I see you've cut your right hand recently."

The landlord looked down at a grimy rag which encircled his right thumb and palm. "Must have cut it with some of that broken glass about the floor," he mumbled.

"How did you manage to get that blood on your clothes? Trying to lift him up?"

"Yes. I tried to lift him up. That would be it. But I was too drunk to manage him."

"You remember that now?"

"Yes. That's right. I tried to lift him up. That's how the blood come on me."

"And you put your hand on the floor and a piece of glass cut it, you think?"

"Yes. That must be how it got cut."

"You hadn't that bottle in your hand, had you, after it was broken?"

"Yes. I picked it up. I didn't know how it come to be broken. Maybe it was it cut my hand."

Rather abruptly the inspector twitched away the towel with

which the dead man's face had been covered. As he did so he looked, not at the ghastly mask that grinned up at him, but at Chrisson.

"Ugly cuts, those on his head," he said, placidly. "However, that's the doctor's job. Thank you, Mr. Chrisson. We needn't keep you from your work any longer just now. If we want to ask you anything, we'll find you about the place, I expect. Going to be a lovely day after the storm."

CHAPTER VIII

If Bunter had expected from his superior any comment upon the landlord's story, he was disappointed. In bland silence Inspector Shadgold proceeded with the minute routine examination of the room and its contents, a task upon which he was still engaged when Dr. Sharp of West Chuley arrived in an ancient Morris-Cowley.

This gentleman, an elderly practitioner struggling against the encroachments of younger and more up-to-date rivals, came into the sitting-room without warning of what he was to find there. He stopped aghast at sight of the motionless form upon the floor.

"Good God!" he ejaculated. "What's this? It's—it's Mr. Tanquered." He stooped and felt a hand. "Dead! Good God! I was to have dined with him tomorrow night! Good God! Who did this?"

"We can't tell you that just yet, Doctor. But we want you to tell us *how* it was done. There are two nasty gashes on his head—one on top and one at the back, and there are three bruises on his face under the blood. Perhaps you'll look at his head first."

Still so perturbed that it took him several minutes to find his glasses, polish them, and adjust them on his weather-beaten nose, the doctor set about his task. In both wounds on the head he found small particles of glass, and his eyes went to the broken bottle which still rested on the floor a few feet away, and to the fragments of glass which littered the carpet.

"There can be no doubt, I should say, as to what caused these injuries. A bottle, I should say. The first blow, on the top of his head, smashed the bottle. The second wound, inflicted with the jagged end of the bottle, is much more lacerated, as you see. Both were delivered with terrific violence, from behind."

"Sufficient violence to kill him?"

"Possibly. He had bled at the ears and at the nose. That would point to his having lived, at all events, for some little time afterwards. I should say that the injuries to his face were caused more probably by heavy blows from a fist. I don't think any of the three could have killed him. Good God! What an end! When did this happen?"

Having estimated that death had occurred approximately six hours previously, the old gentleman gazed round the frowsty little room, frowning in puzzlement at the two empty bottles on the table and the half-empty one on the mantelpiece. Obviously he was tempted to ask questions, but professional dignity stifled his curiosity. He proceeded silently with a search for further injuries, but found none.

"His clothes seem to have been disarranged," he said, as he rose to his feet and dusted the knees of his trousers. "His shirt and undervest have been dragged up in front and his braces undone. There's a curious broad red marking running right round his body—chafed in places—like the mark of a broad belt that was too tight for him. But he isn't wearing a belt. I find no other injury. The bleeding at the ears and nose is curious. It's possible that the blows upon the head brought on a fit. Eyes suffused, too—intensely. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! What's this in his other hand?"

Without difficulty they extricated from the stiff fingers a

small gray-green object of irregular shape, which the inspector examined in puzzled silence.

"Some sort of green stone. Might be a geological specimen, Doctor, do you think?"

If it was, Dr. Sharp had no idea as to its name or nature. He sat down and wrote with a rather shaky hand a formal report of his investigations and prepared to depart.

Bunter glanced at his superior apologetically.

"I forgot to say, Inspector, that there was another person staying in the house last night—Mr. Boyne, from West Chuley. He had a hunting accident yesterday near here, and was brought in here with concussion of the brain. Dr. Waudby of Stoneford saw him last night, I understand. He was unconscious until after I arrived this morning. Perhaps Dr. Sharp would see him?"

The old doctor had pricked up his ears.

"Mr. Boyne? Mr. Boyne and his family are patients of mine. Why wasn't I sent for? Why was Dr. Waudby sent for?"

Growling like a short-winded bear, the good man moved towards the door. "Who looked after him during the night? Anyone?"

"Mrs. Tanquered, I understand, sir," replied Bunter, "and Miss Higgins."

The doctor stared. "Mrs. Tanquered? Oh—so that's what brought Tanquered here, is it?" He checked his musings abruptly and stumped out of the room, clucking.

"What's that he said?" Inspector Shadgold asked, as the door closed behind him.

"Oh, well—" replied Bunter, "there's been a bit of talk about Mrs. Tanquered and Mr. Boyne for a while back. I

suppose he means that Mr. Tanquered wouldn't have allowed her to come here alone to look after Mr. Boyne."

"*Did* she come alone?" asked Shadgold, quickly.

"Can't say, sir."

"We might find out, I think."

His examination of the room completed, save for a postponed search for fingerprints, the inspector interviewed Mr. James Stanton. Mr. Stanton, who stated that he had gone to bed a little after ten o'clock, had been unwell during the night and still felt unwell. He could give no information as to anything which had occurred down in the sitting-room after his retirement. When he had accounted for his own arrival at the inn to stay the night, the inspector took him through the events of the evening. He described the sudden appearance of the black-coated invaders and their flight, pursued by Tanquered. Mrs. Tanquered and Miss Higgins had arrived at six o'clock or thereabouts; Mr. Tanquered considerably later, some time after nine. He had heard that the younger Chrisson had been recognized as one of the men who had burst into the inn, but could not himself vouch for the fact. Nor had he seen the encounter between Tanquered and Luke Chrisson in the taproom, though, from the sitting-room, he had heard some sounds of it. Tanquered, he understood, had poured water over Chrisson and had struck him. That had happened just before he and his son had gone up to bed.

When they had gone upstairs they had left Mr. Tanquered and Dr. Cowlishaw in the sitting-room in the dark, Mr. Burgin with the lamp in the passage outside it, Colonel Gore on the stairs, and Mrs. Tanquered and Miss Higgins at the door of the bedroom in which Mr. Boyne lay.

"Where was Luke Chrisson at that time?"

"In the taproom."

"Asleep or awake?"

"Mr. Tanquered, I understood, had awakened him."

"Had you yourself seen him during the evening?"

"Yes. He was in and out of the sitting-room, and afterwards I saw him in the taproom—about eight o'clock or a little after."

"Was he asleep then?"

"Yes."

"Drunk?"

"Well, I tried to awaken him. We wanted something to eat. I couldn't waken him. He had certainly been drinking. There was a whisky bottle on the floor beside the bench where he lay. The bottle was more than half empty."

The inspector's eyes traveled from the table to the mantelpiece and back again.

"I see. That was some time after eight. Did you see Luke Chrisson again after that, at any time?"

"No. Not until after five o'clock this morning."

"When you were sitting in here with the other gentlemen during the evening—your son, Colonel Gore, and the other two—was any drink brought in?"

"Yes. We had a bottle of whisky."

"The bottle was brought in?"

"Yes. Glenburnie."

"Did you finish the bottle before you went to bed—or rather, had it been finished then?"

"Yes."

"Was there any other bottle then in this room?"

"Not when I left it. But in the passage I saw Mr. Tanquered with a bottle under his arm. He had had two bottles, but by accident I knocked against him in the dark, and one bottle fell and was smashed."

"Whisky—or brandy?"

"I really can't tell you. Mr. Tanquered came on in here with the other bottle under his arm, and I went upstairs with my son to bed."

"You have had business dealings with Mr. Tanquered?"

"No. With Mrs. Tanquered. I have sold a house for her, and procured a flat for her in Linwood. The furniture which I am moving on this trip is hers. Mr. Tanquered has called at my business premises occasionally in the course of these transactions, but I have regarded myself as employed by Mrs. Tanquered."

"So that you don't know him, personally, sufficiently well to speak as to his habits?"

"Oh no."

"Do you know Dr. Cowlishaw?"

"Not at all—except through meeting him here last night."

"This Mr. Burgin, who was here—had you met him before, or known anything about him?"

"No."

Asked to describe Burgin, Mr. Stanton did his best, but could recall nothing to distinguish him from his average fellow-man. Nor could he say at what time Mr. Burgin had gone away from the inn. Certainly some time before five o'clock in the morning, the hour at which he himself had come downstairs. It was his impression, from a remark of Burgin's, that the latter knew Mr. Tanquered. So far as he had observed, Burgin and Cowlishaw did not seem to have met before.

"Colonel Gore? Can you tell us anything about him?"

Oh yes. Mr. Stanton knew all about Colonel Gore. Had known his father—had known of the family all his life. Very well known, the family, in North Somerset. Colonel Gore

had been a very distinguished polo-player at one time. A most charming person. Oh yes, Mr. Stanton knew all about him. For some reason best known to himself, he made no reference whatever to Colonel Gore's present professional activities. He felt quite certain that Colonel Gore had never seen either Burgin or Cowlishaw before the preceding evening.

The inspector produced his geological specimen.

"Have you ever seen this before, Mr. Stanton?"

Mr. Stanton put on his glasses, looked in surprise and shook his head, and Inspector Shadgold pocketed his find again.

"Much obliged to you, Mr. Stanton. I'd like to have a word with your son now, if you'll kindly tell him so."

Mr. Henry Stanton, however, could add nothing to his father's statements, except that he had seen a man severely handled by Tanquered upstairs and had heard that he was a brother of the landlord's. He had heard no noise during the night until, about three o'clock, he had been awakened by Colonel Gore and told what had occurred. He had first attended to his father, who had been unwell, and had then walked to Shippen police station to report Mr. Tanquered's death. Mr. Burgin had still been at the inn when he had started for Shippen, but had left before his return. He, also, had been under the impression that Mr. Burgin and Mr. Tanquered were acquaintances. There had certainly been only one bottle in the sitting-room when he and his father had gone to bed—a whisky bottle, not quite empty, he believed, at that time.

Dr. Cowlishaw had a little more information to give, but not very much. He began by explaining that a friend of his was a patient at the Sanatorium and that, with the intention of visiting him that day, he had stayed the night at the inn.

He had not met either Mr. Tanquered or Mr. Burgin until the preceding evening. After the departure of the other guests to bed, he had sat on with Mr. Tanquered and Mr. Burgin in the sitting-room, chatting about indifferent matters, until about 11:30, when he had gone to bed. He had heard no noise until Colonel Gore had awakened him about three o'clock.

"When you went to bed, you left Mr. Tanquered and Burgin together?"

"Yes."

"Was it your impression that they were friends—or that they had met before?"

"Yes. I gathered that they knew one another fairly well, and that Mr. Burgin had visited Mr. Tanquered's house."

"They appeared to be on friendly terms?"

"Well, I should say, rather, that Mr. Burgin was disposed to be friendly and that Mr. Tanquered was not. As a matter of fact, Mr. Tanquered spoke very little to either of us."

"There was no quarrel or dispute of any sort between them?"

"Oh no."

"You had some drinks, I suppose?"

"They had. I haven't touched alcohol in any shape or form for several years. Mr. Burgin, I believe, finished a bottle of whisky which had been brought in earlier in the evening. Mr. Tanquered drank brandy—a good deal of it, while I was there, and very quickly."

"Who brought the brandy in here?"

"Mr. Tanquered brought one bottle in. He finished that before I went to bed. I never saw a man drink brandy so quickly. He went into the tap then and came back with another bottle of brandy."

"So that there were three bottles in the room when you left it to go to bed—one empty whisky bottle, an empty brandy bottle, and a full bottle of brandy?"

"Yes. I believe that is so."

"I must ask you this question, Dr. Cowlishaw. In your opinion, was Mr. Tanquered drunk when you left the room to go to bed?"

"I really couldn't say. He spoke very little. His laugh was a little excited, certainly. But so far as I can recollect, he walked quite steadily—marvelously so, for a man who had drunk a whole bottle of brandy practically as if it had been water."

"You are absolutely certain that neither Burgin nor he brought another bottle of whisky into the room?"

"Not before I left it."

"You are employed at the Royal College of Geology and Mineralogy, I understand, Dr. Cowlishaw. Can you tell me what this is?"

Dr. Cowlishaw took just a little longer to answer the question than he really required, Inspector Shadgold thought. He stared at the gray-green object which had been produced rather suddenly from the inspector's trousers pocket, not as if he had any difficulty in deciding what it was, but as if its being what it was caused him uneasiness or mental discomfort of some sort. Finally he feigned difficulty in seeing it properly, held out a palm for it, took it to a window, and considered it for a long time, with his back to the two officials.

"No," he said at length, turning, "I'm afraid I'm not prepared to say offhand what it is. May I ask where you found it? In this neighborhood?"

One of the poorest bluffers the inspector had come across,

Dr. Cowlishaw, even with all that hair on his face and those big goggles to help him.

"It was found in Mr. Tanquered's hand, Dr. Cowlishaw. That is why, guessing that you probably had expert knowledge of things of the sort, I took the liberty of asking you. You have never seen anything like it before?"

"No. I'm sorry that I can't identify it for you."

"Thank you. I suppose you will hardly return to London before the inquest. It will probably be held tomorrow or next day, here."

"No. I shall stay here—or in this neighborhood—until after the inquest."

"Well, now, let us see," considered the inspector, when he and Bunter found themselves alone again. "There was a bottle of whisky brought in early in the evening; that seems to have been finished by Burgin. Say that's it there on the table beside the empty brandy bottle. Tanquered brought in a bottle of brandy from the tap a little after ten. Presumably it was empty about half-past eleven. Say that's it on the table. Then he went into the tap and got another bottle of brandy. That's probably it, the unfinished one there on the mantelpiece. That accounts for three of the bottles we have here—and leaves us a whisky bottle—the broken one on the floor—to be accounted for. Now, Chrisson says he drank the best part of a quart of whisky. Where's *that* bottle? Think you can find it, Bunter?"

Bunter found in the passage outside the tap a good deal of broken glass and a strong smell of brandy, and, in an ashpit at the back of the house, discovered some larger fragments, obviously belonging to the bottle of brandy which Tanquered had let fall. But he failed to find an empty whisky bottle in the tap or anywhere else. Luke Chrisson could give

him no help—could offer no suggestion as to the present whereabouts of the bottle of whisky—also Glenburnie—of which he had drunk "the best part."

"Looks a bit awkward for Chrisson, that," Bunter ventured to comment, when he had made his report. But the inspector was absorbed in a further inspection of his green stone and merely jerked his head towards the windows.

"Tell that chap with the motor-bike to run up to Mr. Tanquered's house and say that Inspector Shadgold will call up there round nine and would like to see Mrs. Tanquered and Miss what's-her-name?—Higgins. And you might ask Colonel Gore to come in here. Gore—Funny. I seem to know the name. Another sound sleeper, I'll bet."

CHAPTER IX

Gore was leaning over the gate leading into the untidy yard, smoking an after-breakfast pipe. Close to him a rakish-looking cat, having performed its morning toilet, sat watching Chrisson feeding his Orpingtons and Leghorns. The warmth of the sun was already penetrating the mist; after the turmoil of the night, the calm, mild peace of the morning was deliciously soothing. But—possibly because his Buick lay upside down somewhere a mile away, possibly for other reasons—Colonel Gore's expression was a little perturbed, and it was with visible reluctance that he accepted Bunter's invitation to allow Inspector Shadgold to have a word with him.

The inspector, detecting the Old Army, saluted neatly.

"Good morning, sir. Unpleasant business, this. I suppose you knew Mr. Tanquered?"

"Not at all."

"Dr. Cowlishaw?"

"No."

"This Mr. Burgin?"

"No."

"Mr. Stanton?"

"Yes. I have come across Mr. Stanton before."

"You reside in London?"

"Yes."

Very Old Army, the inspector reflected, this tall, square gentleman whose gray eyes looked very gray and unencouraging in his brown, lean face. Detecting in himself a slight

tendency to be overawed by the eyeglass, the inspector sharpened his tone a little.

"May I ask you to tell me how you came to stay here last night?"

The gray eyes twinkled momentarily.

"Nowhere else to stay."

"You came up to hunt, perhaps, yesterday?"

"No. I had an appointment to meet Mr. Boyne here yesterday afternoon. But, as you probably know, he met with an accident hunting."

"Can you tell me at what time Mr. Tanquered came here?"

"Ten minutes past nine."

"Mrs. Tanquered and Miss Higgins had arrived here before that?"

"Yes. Just before six."

"Where was Chrisson, the landlord, when Mr. Tanquered arrived? About the place—or asleep in the tap?"

"Asleep in the tap, I believe."

"Had you seen him in the course of the evening, before that?"

"Yes. He came into the sitting-room."

"Was he drunk then?"

"A bit fuddled. Not drunk."

"Did you see him afterwards?"

"Yes. I saw him asleep in the tap, about ten minutes past eight."

"Did you see an empty or nearly empty whisky bottle on the floor beside him—or anywhere near him?"

"Yes. On the floor."

"Can you recall noticing the label on the bottle?"

"Yes. A bottle of the same whisky—Glenburnie—had been brought into the sitting-room before that by Chrisson."

"It was on the floor—beside him—empty?"

"About three-quarters empty."

"Some people forced their way into the house about a quarter past nine, and Mr. Tanquered, I understand, turned them out. Can you tell me exactly what occurred, as far as you know?"

Briefly Gore described the invasion of the inn, the scrimmage in the passage upstairs, the flight of the intruders, and the locking up of one of them, supposed to be a younger brother of the landlord's, in the tap.

"With Luke Chrisson?"

"Yes. We left them together."

"Luke Chrisson was still asleep then—or did he wake up?"

"He remained asleep."

"Was the bottle still on the floor beside him?"

"Yes."

"What time was that?"

"About half-past nine."

"Did the younger Chrisson—or supposed younger Chrisson—appear seriously injured?"

"Knocked out temporarily, I should say. Nothing very serious."

"You yourself saw Mr. Tanquered knock him down?"

"Yes."

"You left both the Chrissons, then, locked up in the tap. How long?"

Gore gave an account of the visit to the tap just before ten o'clock in search of oil and candles, the discovery that the younger Chrisson had disappeared, and the incident of the bucket of water. The inspector was pertinacious in his questions as to Chrisson's condition when the incident had taken place and the exact degree of violence which he had exhibited.

He appeared dissatisfied with Gore's statement that Chrisson had merely made an unsuccessful attempt to grapple with Tanquered and had seemed too stupefied to know what he was doing.

"Mr. Tanquered, Chrisson, Burgin, and yourself were the persons who were present. Besides Chrisson, you are the only person, at the moment, who can say what occurred. You realize, sir, that it is very important that you should give the fullest information concerning it."

"Quite. I have already done so. Tanquered threw the water over Chrisson. Chrisson woke up, got to his feet, made a sort of grab at Tanquered, missed him, and was knocked back onto the settle. That was the end of it. We left him there. I went to bed. Tanquered and Burgin went into the sitting-room."

"Did you lock Chrisson into the tap again?"

"No."

"Was the whisky bottle still beside him on the floor or anywhere near him, when you went into the tap shortly before ten o'clock?"

"No. Not so far as I can recall. It may have been somewhere about the room. I did not look for it, naturally."

"But you don't recall seeing it there, then?"

"No."

Again, question by question, the inspector recounted his bottles; Colonel Gore's total, up to the time he himself had gone to bed, corresponded with the Stantons' and Cowlishaw's. Gore supplied another description of Mr. Burgin—this one containing an item of interest. Mr. Burgin had one damaged ear—an ear that looked as if it had either been punched hard and often or passed through a mangle. The inspector,

soothed, reflected that perhaps he had been mistaken in suspecting Colonel Gore of undue reticence.

"Now, between ourselves, Colonel," he asked, winningly, "what sort of fellow is this Burgin? A gentleman?"

"Good God, no!" replied the Colonel. "Quite an intelligent, wide-awake chap. Sort of chap that goes to race-meetings in train-loads."

"A friend of Mr. Tanquered's, apparently?"

"Well, evidently he knew Tanquered. I rather think he had come down here to see him."

The inspector made careful notes of such fragments of Burgin's conversation as pointed towards this fact, and then passed on to the manner and hour of his departure from the inn—a peculiarly abrupt departure.

Having made his dramatic discovery of the tragedy in the sitting-room, Gore had cleared Chrisson out of it and had locked its door. He had then awakened the younger Mr. Stanton and Dr. Cowlishaw, and told them briefly what had occurred. As the elder Mr. Stanton had been unwell during the night, and was then—shortly before three—asleep, he had left him undisturbed, and had gone on to Burgin's bedroom. He had found it empty, though the bed had apparently been slept in. Going downstairs again, however, to his surprise he had encountered Burgin in the passage outside the sitting-room door. Burgin had then told him that, having heard noises below, he had got up and gone down to discover their cause, believing it possible that the black-coated intruders had again broken into the house. He was fully dressed at that time. It was possible that, while Gore had been in Dr. Cowlishaw's room, Burgin had passed along the cross passage on his way downstairs; but Dr. Cowlishaw's door had been open while Gore had been in his room, and neither of them had

heard anyone pass it. Cowlishaw's and Burgin's bedrooms were beside one another in the cross passage, looking into the yard. Gore's and young Mr. Stanton's on the other side of that passage, at the front of the house; Boyne's room in the main passage near the stairs; Mr. James Stanton's at the other end, overlooking the yard.

"In other words," summed up the inspector, "you do not believe Burgin's account. You think that, before you went downstairs, and discovered Mr. Tanquered dead, Burgin had got up and gone down? It would have been possible for him to have been somewhere about the lower part of the house when you first went downstairs, without your seeing him?"

Gore shrugged. "I'm giving you facts, Inspector, not thinks. The only light downstairs was that of the candles in the sitting-room. There might have been fifty people down there without my seeing one of them."

"Um," said Shadgold. "Then what happened?"

"I told Burgin that I had found Tanquered dead in the sitting-room. He whistled, and said: 'Hell's bells! Those damned loonies—they've done it. I knew I heard them shuffling about.' I suggested that he should walk in to Shippen and inform the police, and he opened the front door and said, 'I'll run over in Mrs. T.'s little 'bus.' I looked out and saw Mrs. Tanquered's two-seater outside, not where it had stood before—nearer to the yard gate. I was rather surprised. It certainly had been nowhere in sight from the front door when I had looked out about ten or fifteen minutes before. He went back along the passage, and then came back to me, putting on an overcoat and a cap, said 'I shan't be long,' got into the car, and drove off."

"Towards Shippen?"

"Yes. The younger Mr. Stanton came downstairs just

then. I can't really tell you why, but I got it into my head that Burgin had made a get-away for some reason. He had nipped into the car like a flash, and she had started up at once, having stood for six or seven hours, uncovered, on a bitterly cold night. Anyhow, I asked young Stanton to go in to Shippen, and he went. I thought it better to stay on the premises myself. Stanton and this constable here got back here under the hour; Mr. Burgin hasn't turned up yet."

The inspector sat silent for some moments.

"You mean—as regards the car starting up so quickly—that it had been running just before that? In fact, that when you looked out the first time, you did not see it because Burgin had taken it somewhere?"

"You mustn't ask me to guess, you know, Inspector. I have told you what I saw and heard. Mrs. Tanquered's engine may be a specially good starter."

"Or," reflected Shadgold, "some one else may have started the engine up previously. The other Chrisson, for instance. We know that he started up *your* car, at any rate, and drove her away. He may have tried Mrs. Tanquered's car first, and then thought that, if he was going to travel any distance at speed, as he possibly intended to, your car was more powerful. So he took yours."

Colonel Gore had no comment to offer upon this suggestion. He smiled pleasantly and waited for the inspector's next question.

"In your opinion, would it have been possible for two cars to be started up in front of the house without anyone in the house hearing?"

"Quite. Mine was. My bedroom window was not more than twelve feet from the bonnet of my car. I heard nothing. The wind was southwest; sounds would have been carried

away from the front of the inn. The wind made a frightful racket, too. Besides, quite possibly my car was pushed away, and started up at a safe distance. Any fairly hefty person could manhandle her easily enough."

"When you looked out of doors before you came in here and found Mr. Tanquered, did you see or hear anyone moving about outside?"

"No."

"After Mr. Tanquered drove them out, you saw nothing of the people who broke in here?"

"With the exception of the younger Chrisson, no."

"But they could have been anywhere about without your seeing them?"

"Oh yes."

"Well—you've told me that the younger Mr. Stanton came back with this constable here. Did you inform the constable that Burgin was supposed to have gone over to Shippen to fetch him?"

"Yes."

Bunter corroborated; but he had seen nothing of Mr. Burgin. The road between the inn and Shippen was clear until just the near side of the village, where a tree had fallen across it. Bunter did not think a car could have got by and gone through Shippen.

But there were three other roads, by any one of which Burgin might have gone at least some way towards somewhere else. Speculation was clearly useless upon the point, for the moment. The inspector returned to Colonel Gore.

"I suppose Mrs. Tanquered was told what had occurred?"

"I told Miss Higgins, after Mr. Stanton had started for Shippen. She, I believe, told Mrs. Tanquered. They both left the inn about a quarter of an hour later."

"They went home, of course?"

"I assume so. I offered to go with them, as these people were still possibly hanging about. But Mrs. Tanquered preferred to go without escort."

"You told them that Burgin had taken their car?"

"Yes—to go over to Shippen. I suggested their waiting until he got back, but they went off on foot."

"You had no conversation with Mrs. Tanquered—about her husband's death?"

"No."

"I think," said the inspector, after a pause, "that we needn't worry a lot about Burgin. It looks to me as if he'd just got the wind up a bit and cleared off—to a safer and more comfortable place. I expect the car will turn up all right—probably not far from here. In any case, the thing is plain enough. You saw Tanquered strike both the Chrissons. Both of them were in the tap for a while, shut up together. You saw a whisky bottle beside Luke Chrisson on the floor in the tap. You found him here in this room, on his knees, close to Tanquered, with a broken whisky bottle in his hand, his hands and arms and clothes marked with blood. Tanquered was killed by blows from a bottle ——"

"That is the doctor's opinion?"

"There can't be any doubt about it. There's a whisky bottle too many in here—and one missing in the tap. Well ——"

The gesture with which Shadgold's big hand laid down his fountain pen was regretful but quite definite. He had made up his mind.

Constable Bunter's official intelligence worked in watertight compartments. Since three o'clock that morning it had been very busy in one which contained just those impressions which life had conveyed to it during that period, and no

others. But at this point it broke through into another compartment.

"There's another thing, Inspector. This man, Simon Chrisson, who was killed down below there on the hill last night, was in trouble with Mr. Tanquered before—a couple of years ago."

The inspector was careful to show no slightest elation.

"How was that, Bunter?"

With commendable fairness Bunter gave the facts which had led up to the commission of the younger Chrisson to a lunatic-asylum. According to his account, the assault on Mrs. Tanquered had been one of a number of similar molestations of women who had encountered him in lonely places. Also there had been, over a period of seven years following his demobilization, quite a considerable history of assaults, more or less violent, upon persons of his own sex. As regarded the matter of the death of Mr. Tanquered's nephew, Bunter, it was clear, had striven without great success to preserve an open mind. There was no doubt that Simon Chrisson had been in the yard up at Danmore Lodge very shortly before the child had been found dead. And Mr. Tanquered had given him a "proper hiding" on the occasion of the joy-ride which had ended in a ditch. Certainly there had been a great deal of talk in the neighborhood at the time. The Bower of Bliss had been boycotted for a long period afterwards and, in fact, had never since recovered any real local custom. Bunter had heard that, ever since his brother had been shut up, Luke Chrisson had wagged his mouth a good deal about Mr. Tanquered, especially when he had a drop of drink in him—apparently a normal condition.

The inspector nodded gravely, and looked towards the windows once more as a motor-cycle banged and spat to a

halt outside the inn. He saluted Colonel Gore again punctiliously.

"Inquest tomorrow morning, here, sir, I expect—or morning after. As you're the principal witness, if I may say so, we shall want an address that will find you in the meantime."

Colonel Gore showed no marked exultation at the prospect of a star part at the inquest. He gave an address in Linwood which would find him and turned to leave the sitting-room.

"By the way," he said, casually, as he passed Tanquered, "I suppose you've had a look at his right hand?"

"Oh yes," smiled the inspector—the smile of a man who always had a look at anything worth having a look at. "We found that, all right."

An obvious opportunity to say an agreeable thing to his principal witness presented itself. "Pretty quick of you to notice that, sir."

Perhaps Colonel Gore was mollified. He looked back. "You know what it is, of course?"

"Some sort of geological specimen, I should say, sir."

"Rather a valuable one," smiled Gore, "*I* should say. As a matter of fact, it's an uncut diamond—and a pretty big one at that. Happen to know if that 'bus of mine is badly done in?"

But before the inspector had time to switch his thoughts over from uncut diamonds to done-in 'buses, a silvery voice wheeled him towards the door of the room. Miss Higgins stood there, hesitating on the threshold.

"Inspector Shadgold?"

Hurriedly the kindly man moved forwards so that his stalwart bulk shut off her view of the figure on the threadbare

carpet. No sight for such pretty eyes, that. Leaving Bunter in the sitting-room to reflect with philosophic melancholy upon the uncertainty of human affairs, he shepherded Miss Higgins along the passage and out into the morning.

Out there the world was fresh and bright and sane. The sun was fast gaining the upper hand and laying comfort to the ruffled earth. The slopes behind the inn, that yesterday had been chill gray, were warm bronze. A wisp of lazy, homely smoke rose from a chimney against the darkness of the beeches. To eastward a sky of mildest blue was disentangling itself from the routed mists. The inn's chickens had strayed out from the yard; some of them were pecking busily beneath the sitting-room windows. Impossible not to feel cheerful and glad to be alive on such a morning—glad to forget for a moment those who were not. Miss Higgins had come down on the carrier of the motor-cycle. Despite the gravity of the night's happenings, her gray eyes persisted in twinkling, her lovely color was as fresh and as warm as a child's. Inspector Shadgold was the model father of a rising family and no more of a chicken than Colonel Gore; but both these middle-aged males fastened respectfully attentive and admiring eyes upon this deliciously healthy and decorative young woman. They had both, literally and metaphorically, closed the door upon that fusty, evil-odored sitting-room and its history. Now they both—quite unconsciously, no doubt—assumed a certain debonair sprightliness of poise, mental and physical, which, if it did not entirely put middle-age to flight, at least suggested that youth had not yet, from either of them, quite fled. In the background the motor-cycling constable stood twisting his mustache, furtively, to increased smartness. And Miss Higgins herself, no doubt in response to this tribute

of gallantry, smiled—if gravely, yet with a suspicion of demure roguishness—at them from beneath her long black lashes.

"What on earth has become of Mrs. Tanquered's car?" she asked. "Where has that wretched man taken it?"

CHAPTER X

Assured that the promptest steps would be taken to recover the car—and, incidentally, Mr. Burgin—she informed Inspector Shadgold that, though Mrs. Tanquered had naturally received a very great shock, she was quite prepared to see him whenever he could go up to Danmore Lodge.

"Not that, I'm afraid, either of us has very much to tell you. We both fell fast asleep in our chairs some time between twelve and one, and didn't wake until Colonel Gore knocked at the door—about three o'clock, I think."

"You heard nothing? No sound about the house?"

"Not a sound—except the wind."

Mrs. Tanquered's car, she said, was always a fairly good starter from cold—especially so at present, since the battery had been recharged during the week in Linwood.

"This Mr. Burgin—was he a friend of Mr. Tanquered's?"

Miss Higgins's eyebrows queried the "friend."

"I always understood that he came down to see Mr. Tanquered on business—though I have no idea what the business was."

"He came frequently?"

"Oh no. Not more than a dozen times altogether, I should say, in the last two years. I think the last time he came was in the spring of this year—about the end of April."

"Where did he come from?"

"I have no idea. Mr. Tanquered never made any reference to him whatever—even to Mrs. Tanquered."

"Can you describe him for me, please?"

The third portrait of Mr. Burgin revealed no new detail. Miss Higgins, at all events, it seemed, had found nothing in him to attract her particular attention. Mr. Tanquered had always appeared to receive him in a friendly way; but his visits had always been short—as a rule not longer than an hour.

Inspector Shadgold coughed deprecatingly.

"I'm sorry to have to ask you this question, Miss Higgins—but did Mr. Tanquered drink more than was good for him?"

"Sometimes," Miss Higgins admitted, reluctantly. "As a rule, perhaps not more than a couple of whiskies-and-sodas in a day. He would go on like that for months, and then suddenly break out. For a few days the fit would last, and then he would settle down again. He was never in the least violent or noisy—just soaked himself with brandy all day long—all night, sometimes. He never went out when one of these fits was on—shut himself up in his own room. So that, apart from the servants, I don't think anyone really knew. . . ."

"I suppose," Colonel Gore ventured, "that, if he was pretty well hardened, it took a great deal of brandy to affect him much."

"Curiously enough, a very little seemed to affect him a great deal. Usually he was a most cheerful person, with plenty to say for himself. But the moment he began to drink brandy he became gloomy and silent and stupid. Mrs. Tanquered always knew at once when one of his fits was coming on. I've seen him fall asleep while she was speaking to him. However, there was nothing to do with him; it was useless to try to stop him."

"So that if he had drunk, say, a bottle of brandy pretty quickly, he might quite possibly fall asleep?"

"He would, I should say, if he were left to himself. I suppose it's perfectly horrid of me to show any curiosity about such a thing, but when, do you think . . ."

"According to what the doctor says, he was killed probably some time between one and two o'clock."

"Then the doctor has seen him? What doctor? Dr. Waudby?"

"No. Dr. Sharp. By the way, was Mr. Tanquered prone to fits—or anything of that sort?"

"Good gracious, no, Inspector Shadgold! He was one of the healthiest, strongest men I have ever known—except just for that one curious little weakness."

The inspector explained his last question; it was clear that he regarded Dr. Sharp's suggestion as to the possibility of a fit as unimportant.

"In any case," he pointed out, "if the injuries to his head brought it on, and if it killed him . . . well, it amounts to the same thing for whoever inflicted those injuries."

"Quite," Miss Higgins agreed. "You have no idea, yet, of course . . . ?"

But Inspector Shadgold had a very clear idea. He lowered his voice.

"We haven't very far to look, I'm afraid. Of course, we have to look all round us, you know, Miss Higgins. But that doesn't say that we're not to see what's under our noses. However . . ." The broad shoulders shrugged and made a transition. "Now—about Dr. Cowlishaw. Do you know if Mr. Tanquered had any acquaintance with him—or anything to do with him in any way?"

"No. I have never heard him speak of anyone named Cowlishaw."

"Had Mr. Tanquered any profession or business?"

"None—that I know of. At all events, since his marriage."

"Nothing to do with geological work of any kind?"

Miss Higgins stared. Her eyebrows puckered in a frown of gently humorous puzzlement.

"Gracious, no! Geology! The last thing on earth, I should say, the poor man would dream of taking the slightest interest in. Horses and dogs, hunting and shooting and fishing—sport of any kind—that was what he lived for. Why do you ask that?"

"Well, you see, we've found something rather curious in his hand—something we think may be of considerable value—an uncut diamond."

Miss Higgins was incredulous. "A diamond? In his hand . . . ? But how extraordinary!"

"I'm not an authority on such things myself, I needn't say. But Colonel Gore here thinks it may be quite a valuable diamond. Have you ever heard Mr. Tanquered make any reference to anything of the sort, as being in his possession?"

Blankly Miss Higgins stared at the gray-green stone displayed upon the inspector's broad red palm. She shook her head.

"Never. You think that thing is a diamond? It doesn't look very like one, does it? But, of course, I've never seen an uncut diamond in my life. No—I never heard Mr. Tanquered speak of anything of the kind. Perhaps Mrs. Tanquered can help you."

Colonel Gore retrieved Miss Higgins's walking-stick, which had fallen.

"Had Mr. Tanquered lived abroad at all?" he asked, as he handed it to her.

"No. Certainly not since his marriage. He lived in South Africa before his marriage, of course."

"Oh!" commented Shadgold. "South Africa, eh? That's interesting." He contemplated his find. "He may have brought this home with him, then."

"But how extraordinary that you should have found it—in his hand," Miss Higgins mused.

"Exactly," Gore agreed. "Which reminds me. Do you know if Mr. Tanquered usually wore a belt of any sort?"

The gray eyes twinkled more brightly.

"Good Heavens, Colonel Gore! do you really expect me to know what the poor man wore to keep the bits together? I haven't the ghost of an idea."

"I'm not quite sure that this was a question of keeping the bits together."

"Perhaps," suggested the inspector, archly, "Colonel Gore suspects that he wore a corset. Well, well, we all have our little secret vanities, haven't we, Miss Higgins?" He turned to watch the doctor come out of the door of the inn and prepare to mount into his aged chariot.

"Old Dr. Sharp off. He's been up to see Mr.—the gentleman who was injured hunting yesterday."

Miss Higgins turned quickly, her face filled with solicitude now.

"I must ask him how Mr. Boyne is getting on."

She flitted over to the Cowley. It seemed to Inspector Shadgold that the morning, after all, was not so bright and that he was not getting much forrader with things. A thought occurred to him.

"Why did you ask if Mr. Tanquered wore a belt, Colonel?"

Gore smiled.

"As a matter of fact, the question *was* quite an unnecessary one. Obviously he did—next his skin. A rather wide belt, made, I should say, of webbing. From the fact that

his skin was chafed pretty badly in one or two places, I should say that he had only recently taken to wearing it. Wouldn't you?"

A solemn nod appeared to Inspector Shadgold the safest response to that question. He executed it, inspected the landscape, and then said in mild reproof, "You seem to have made a pretty close examination. I presume you didn't disturb his clothes in any way?"

"They *were* disturbed. But not by me. I noticed, of course, that his underclothes had been pulled about. It occurred to me that he had perhaps received some injury on his body, so I looked. But I rearranged the clothes exactly as I found them."

"Rather irregular, Colonel . . . however . . . funny place to wear a belt—under your clothes. One of these surgical belts, likely."

"I wonder," mused Gore, "why anyone should have been curious to have a look at a surgical belt."

Shadgold thought about that for a little time. "A pity you touched his clothes, Colonel. However, it can't be helped now. I'm going up to see Mrs. Tanquered. If he wore a belt, she's safe to know. Not that I see any great importance in it—unless it was a belt he carried something valuable about with him in."

"Uncut diamonds, for instance," suggested Gore.

The inspector said, "By Jing!" softly, and fell into a reverie, turning to regard the somber façade of the inn, untouched by the growing radiance of the morning. "We've got to have a look round this blinking pub, straightaway, then. Bit of a job. As many holes and corners in these old inns as'd take you a week to poke out."

As he turned to issue instructions to the man on the motor-

cycle, a darkly-clad figure mounted on a bicycle came into view on the road leading up from East Chuley. He waited until the cyclist, a rather breathless young constable, alighted beside him and saluted.

"Morning, Inspector. Sergeant Hemphill, from Stoneford, sent me up to report that we've got eleven of the thirteen men he's looking for. There's one dead. That leaves one still on the loose. But he's been seen near Blagdon, and the sergeant expects to get him in an hour or so."

"First I've heard of Sergeant Hemphill looking for anyone," remarked the inspector, a little curtly. Other people appeared to be getting forrader more quickly.

The young constable explained. There had been a sudden outbreak of typhoid at the Winsham asylum, and it had been decided in a hurry to evacuate all the inmates, in view of a proposed overhaul of very obsolete sanitary conditions. On the preceding afternoon a batch of thirteen (including Simon Chrisson) had been dispatched in a very ancient lorry, hired for the occasion from the local coal-merchant, to St. Jacob's Hill Infirmary, outside Westmouth, in charge of two warders. Somewhere between Cross and Stoneford, one of the lorry's pistons had seized up. While the driver and one of the warders were endeavoring to free it, the second warder had permitted his thirteen charges to alight and seat themselves on the bank beside the road. Incautiously, he had lighted his pipe and turned to watch the repair operations. These had been suddenly terminated by a furious fusillade of road metal, taken from a large heap just beside the spot where the lorry had stopped. Stunned and taken unawares, the driver and the two warders, despite a valiant resistance, had been overpowered and beaten into insensibility. They had

been found lying unconscious beside the lorry, by a passing car. But by that time the lorry's passengers had disappeared.

By what wanderings they had reached the Bower of Bliss was not known as yet. There was, however, little doubt that Simon Chrisson, who had known the country around all his life, had been their guide across the hills to his brother's inn. It was impossible at present, the young constable reported, to get a word of sense out of any of them.

"Fair off their heads, they seem, sir. Screaming, some of them, something wicked. They're shut up in a barn at the end of the village. And a fine old row the people are kicking up about their being left so near the school."

"Had anything to eat?" asked the practical inspector.

"Not yet, sir."

"Well, get back, and tell Sergeant Hemphill to see that they get a meal straight off. That'll quiet the poor devils down a bit. I expect they've had nothing since midday yesterday. I'll come down presently. Tell the sergeant to make arrangements to move them on to Westmouth, but not to move them until I come down. When you've done that come back here, and bring another man with you. Get a jerk into it."

The young constable sped away on his bicycle, pedaling with all the might of his long legs in the wake of Dr. Sharp's car, which had moved off just before. Miss Higgins, still solicitous, stood doubtfully before the front door, in which the overcoated and hatted figure of Dr. Cowlishaw was framed.

"It's so extraordinary," she said, as Gore and the inspector approached her, "that no one has come up from Mr. Boyne's house. His mother and sister are abroad, of course, but he has a whole houseful of servants."

Dr. Cowlishaw raised his hat politely.

"Some one did come up last night to inquire for Mr. Boyne, a little after eleven. His valet, I think. Mr. Burgin went to the door and spoke to him—told him, I think, that you and Mrs. Tanquered were looking after Mr. Boyne. He went away without coming in."

"He'd better come up and stay here," decided the inspector. "Mr. Boyne can't be left alone. I'll send word down to his house. What does the doctor say about him, Miss Higgins? Any chance of moving him out?"

No. Dr. Sharp had forbidden any attempt to move the patient, whose condition was still serious. He had promised, if possible, to procure a nurse from Westmouth some time during the day. Meanwhile Boyne was to be kept absolutely quiet. Any discussion of business matters with his injured client being obviously out of the question, Gore decided to go in search of his Buick and make arrangements for its salvage.

"Until tomorrow, then, Inspector."

He saluted Miss Higgins and received the most charming of smiles. The inspector watched the tall tweed-clad figure saunter away down the East Chuley road, its legs moving with the slight stiffness of the horseman.

"Gore . . ." he mused. "Now where did I hear, or what did I hear, of Colonel Gore before? It's just round the corner—but hang me if I can get at it."

"Rather odd, isn't it," said Miss Higgins, musingly also, "that Colonel Gore should have turned up here for this dreadful business?"

The inspector's blue eyes regarded her sharply.

"Why do you say 'odd,' Miss Higgins?"

"Oh, well . . . this sort of thing is his job, isn't it?

Strangely enough, too, last night, when he was saying good night to Mrs. Tanquered and myself, I said, jokingly, 'You make a habit of being mixed up in queer businesses, Colonel Gore, don't you?'"

Curiosity overcame the inspector's politeness.

"Who the juice is he, then?" he asked, bluntly.

Miss Higgins's eyebrows lifted.

"Why, I thought you knew, Inspector. Colonel Gore . . . ? Oh, well, he's the man who cleared up that ghastly business at Waterley Junction—you remember?" [1]

The inspector's blue eyes went back to the tall figure retreating along the East Chuley road.

"By Jing!" he said. And after some moments, "I *thought* he was a bit of a Nosy Parker."

He saluted and passed into the house, to proceed, aided by Bunter and the motor-cyclist, with the business of getting forrader with things. Business suddenly brightened up. Within ten minutes, in a soiled and threadbare jacket hanging from a hook at the end of the passage leading past the sitting-room and the tap to the rear of the house, Bunter found a broad web belt, fitted with a number of small pockets. One end of the belt was stained with still damp blood. And in one of the pockets were three somewhat smaller editions of the inspector's gray-green stone. Luke Chrisson, while admitting that the jacket was his, could give no explanation of the presence of the belt in its pocket. Asked to accompany the inspector to East Chuley police station, he became dangerously violent, and, having knocked Bunter out with a couple of hurricane blows, made a determined attempt to use the gun which hung above the kitchen fireplace. Ultimately he was handcuffed and taken away, still resisting vehemently.

[1] See *The Slip-Carriage Case.*

Later in the day he was lodged in Westmouth Bridewell, charged with various offences committed upon the persons of three members of the Somerset constabulary and with being in unlawful possession of certain property belonging to other persons as yet unspecified.

Long before that, the outlying fugitive had been captured and Mrs. Tanquered's car restored to her. The latter was discovered derelict at a lonely part of the cross-road connecting Shippen and Black Chapel, its front wheels touching the fallen tree which had checked its further flight. The only traces of Burgin found in it were two burnt matches and some smears of blood on the floor-cloth and the clutch-pedal.

Long before that, too, the other guests of the Bower of Bliss—save two—had departed. The Stantons, trusting in a report that the way to the Bridgwater road was clear, went off in their lorry, which the driver had succeeded in coaxing once more to activity. Mr. Stanton, senior, still very pale, and afflicted by a violent headache, waved a forlorn hand of farewell from the driver's cab as it passed the inn. Dr. Cowlishaw found a lodging in Shippen. Colonel Gore, having seen his car once more on four wheels, though with a strained frame, arranged for its towage to Westmouth and himself returned there by train, after a prolonged visit to the telephone cabinet of East Chuley post-office. Only Mr. Boyne—tended now by his most unwilling manservant—and Mr. Tanquered remained. The inspector returned, found some fingerprints of Luke Chrisson's—to the best of his belief—but no others, and went away, humming a little song about shutting up flats. Bunter, with a large blackish lump over one eye and a very stiff jaw, sat on the gate leading into the yard and resumed his reflections upon the mutability of human fortunes.

Towards five o'clock the inspector passed in his car, returning from his interview with Mrs. Tanquered. But he passed. Dr. Sharp came, saw Mr. Boyne, and went. Dusk fell. Darkness came. Constable Bunter had always loathed cats. But he was glad of the Bower of Bliss's tabby before his relief arrived.

"Free booze at the Bower of Bliss tonight, eh?" grinned his colleague, with a gesture of his helmet towards the tap.

Bunter spread a large hand in renunciation as he turned to depart towards bed.

"You can 'ave it, mate," he said.

CHAPTER XI

Another dawn came up on to Mendip and in due course reached the Bower of Bliss. But there was no gladness in this morning. Out of a melancholy mist which blanketed the countryside with dingy cotton-wool, a sad drizzling rain descended with an air of intending to keep on doing so all day. Boyne's man had lighted the kitchen fire, but the wind was easterly and the smoke that should have gone up the yawning chimney filled all the lower part of the house with a choking reek. Constable Furzman, not expecting until eight o'clock the arrival of Constable Bunter to relieve him, preferred to stand, unbelted and unhelmeted, at the front door, where at least a cigarette tasted like a cigarette.

Shortly after seven o'clock the sound of a car's approach induced him to saunter out on to the road. What he saw sent him scurrying back into the Bower of Bliss in search of the remainder of his uniform. But before he had completely invested himself in this, two cars swished into the bay and shed, each, two passengers. Two of these the flurried sentinel recognized as Inspector Shadgold and Sergeant Hemphill. They made way for the entrance of the other two—a tall, fair man with a pleasant smile and a monocle, whom the inspector addressed as "Colonel," and a rather grim dark one, whom he addressed as "Dr. Melhuish." All four passed into the sitting-room, the door of which shut behind them.

Constable Furzman was standing to attention beside the cars when, about half an hour later, their passengers reappeared at the front door.

"Thanks very much, Inspector," said the man with the eyeglass, genially. "Sorry to have routed you out so early. But, as you will understand, the thing was rather urgent, and Dr. Melhuish has a long day before him in Linwood. So we decided to get to work early."

"That's all right, Colonel," replied the inspector, a little stiffly. "If I get orders from my superior officer, they've got to be carried out." He paused. "I hope your visit has been satisfactory?"

His blue eyes went from Colonel Gore's to those of Dr. Melhuish, but garnered nothing beyond the purport of Colonel Gore's amiable reply.

"Quite—quite, thanks. Dr. Sharp will do the autopsy, I suppose?"

"If there is one, he will do it, yes."

Gore's smile was a little insistent.

"Of course there *will* be one——"

Inspector Shadgold wrapped himself in the most formal of officialdom.

"That will be for us to decide. Do I understand that Dr. Melhuish has made this examination of the body under the chief constable's instructions?"

Dr. Melhuish answered that question as briefly as it could be answered—evidently his habit with questions. "No. With his permission."

"With a view to giving evidence at the inquest?"

"Possibly."

"I see. Thank you. You will understand that I wished to know your position in the matter."

The colonel and the doctor got into their car and disappeared into the mist. The inspector took Sergeant Hemphill back with him into the sitting-room, where they stood

for a little while in contemplation of the sheeted figure which had been lifted on to the table.

"Very irregular, whatever the meaning of it is," said Shadgold at length. "This chap Gore must have a pull with the skipper. I suppose over that business down at Waterley."

"Well, what's the game?" asked Sergeant Hemphill. "Thinks he has something up his sleeve, it seems to me."

"There's something behind it," the inspector nodded. "We've got to watch our step. Got to have an autopsy, that's certain. The sooner we get old Sharp on the job the better. We'll run down now and poke him up, I think."

When Constable Bunter took over at eight o'clock, Constable Furzman confided to him his belief that the inspector had the wind up about something. But there was, at any rate, no outward symptom of that supposed inward disturbance in the inspector's serenity when the inquest opened at ten o'clock on the following morning. Nor in the course of the proceedings did anything occur to ruffle for a moment the calm, regretful cheerfulness with which he listened to the evidence of the other witnesses and gave his own. Dr. Melhuish was present, but no reference was made to his visit of the previous day; whatever had lain behind it remained still, for the inspector, behind it.

The day, until about one o'clock, was a fine one; the event the most interesting that had occurred on Mendip within living memory. Since the preceding afternoon a constant succession of cars had defiled before the Bower of Bliss, pausing usually to allow the occupants to gaze upon the dingy windows of the tragic sitting-room. Today long files of them were parked along the Shippen and East Chuley roads, many of their passengers, as the morning wore on, combining emotional thrills with those of an *al fresco* lunch.

The ramshackle barn at the back of the inn, in which the inquiry was held, was crowded to overflowing; the yard filled with less fortunate sensation-seekers. There was a markedly hostile demonstration as Chrisson, hedged about by uniforms, passed through the crowd.

In a district so sparsely populated, a man in Tanquered's position had been personally known to but few of those who counted as the social inferiors of a landed proprietor who did not farm and lived for his own pleasure. But to such of them as had lived in his immediate vicinity and, in the two years of his residence at Chanton Mendip, had grown accustomed to his handsome, sunburnt face and his cheery "Morning" or "Afternoon" from his horse or his car as he passed, the manner of this civil, pleasant-spoken gent and good sportsman's ending seemed sufficiently shocking and unmerited to stir their placid blood to bitterness against the slayers. The Chrissons, too, were comparative strangers, their tenure of the Bower of Bliss dating from only a few years before the war. It was as recently as 1911 that the father of Luke and Simon, coming across from Coalham—a district for centuries of ill-repute on Mendip—had taken over the house from the widow of a popular predecessor, then recently deceased.

It was true that both sons had joined up early in 1915, and that both had been wounded for their country's sake. But many hundreds of better Somerset men, for that matter, had given their lives without any song being made about it.

Also it was admitted that, until the shutting up of his brother, Luke Chrisson had seemed a harmless, steady sort of chap enough, and had managed his house without trouble either with the police or with scanty patrons. But it was recalled also that his father had been odd in his ways, a

heavy drinker, and subject to fits of violent ill-temper. Without doubt, there was a twist in the Chrisson lot. Shippen felt no regret at the prospect of losing the last of them as a neighbor.

With neighbors of his own social standing Tanquered had been extremely popular, if their wives had refused intimacy to Mrs. Tanquered. These comfortable, well-to-do folk were, naturally, horrified that a man who had hunted and shot and played bridge with them should have been struck down like a bullock and died in a little roadside public house. And, since it had quickly been rumored abroad that the reason which had taken Louis Tanquered to the inn and to his death had been his desire to silence possible gossip concerning her ridiculous determination to nurse young Boyne, little sympathy was felt for the widow. She was not subpœnaed for the inquest, the police having decided to spare her the unnecessary ordeal of stating that she could tell nothing of the manner of her husband's murder.

Dr. Sharp, it appeared, had performed an autopsy on the preceding day, and had somewhat revised his original judgment. Though he gave it as his opinion that death might have been caused by the injuries to the deceased's head, both blows having been struck with savage violence, he detailed, with a minuteness that betrayed some anxiety, certain appearances which, he admitted, might point to suffocation.

"I was struck," he said, "by the color of the face and lips. The face was peculiarly white—livid. The lips were unusually dark, with, at the same time, an appearance of bloodlessness. The whites of the eyes were greatly—very greatly—suffused. The bleeding at the ears and nose, though slight, might be regarded as pointing towards the same supposi-

tion. Both cavities of the heart were greatly dilated with blood—very greatly so."

When the worthy old gentleman had repeated these remarks several times over, with various embroideries and a lavish employment of medical terms, the coroner brought him to the point kindly.

"Did you find any marks—marks that might have been inflicted by violence—on the throat?"

"Not on the throat itself—nor on the neck. The skin under the chin was rubbed and chafed. There were some abrasions both there and on the upper lip. Also at the roots of the nose and on both nostrils. Small scratches. On the left cheek, along the line of the jaw-bone, I found three longer scrapes, running from the ear towards the point of the chin. Two of these had torn the skin slightly. I cannot undertake to say positively whether these injuries were inflicted before, after, or at the same time as those inflicted by the blows on the head. Provisionally, I am inclined to believe that an attempt may first have been made to strangle or suffocate the deceased, and, this failing or not proving quick enough, he may then have been struck upon the head and killed. In my opinion he might have died within a few minutes after receiving the injuries to his head. In a few minutes he would have bled extensively from such wounds—particularly from that at the base of the skull, which lacerated some blood-vessels. I cannot say whether deceased was intoxicated at the moment of his death. The stomach and intestines contained brandy. I found no traces of organic disease of any kind. The body was that of an absolutely healthy man."

The concise evidence of the police witnesses caused the coroner little necessity for interrogation, until the bloodstains

found upon the floor-mat and clutch-pedal of Mrs. Tanquered's two-seater were reached. At that point he asked if there was any evidence to show whose feet had left these marks.

"No, sir," replied Inspector Shadgold. "Beyond the fact that the man Burgin was seen to enter the car and drive it away from the inn."

"Is it suggested," a juror asked, "that these marks were made by Burgin's boots, or shoes, or whatever he was wearing?"

But the inspector was not there to make suggestions. The coroner returned to such traces of blood found between the body of the deceased and the door of the sitting-room, as might be supposed to have been left there by feet leaving the room. Some such traces there were—five small bloodstains and two larger ones, none exceeding the size of a penny. But it was impossible, in the inspector's opinion, to form any reasonable opinion as to the kind or size of footwear which had produced them, as to whether the same boots or shoes had produced all of them, or, indeed, as to whether they had been produced by boots or shoes. Some other similar stains had been found in the passage, between the sitting-room door and the door of the kitchen, and in the kitchen itself.

Colonel Gore was asked at this stage to say if, when he found Chrisson in the sitting-room, he had observed any stains of blood upon his boots.

"When he stood up, I noticed that there was some blood upon the toe-caps of his boots. Very little on one boot, rather more on the other. Yes—sufficient to leave a small mark or smear on anything the toe of the boot came in contact with. I did not see the soles of his boots."

"Did he leave the sitting-room, then?"

"Yes. I thought it better that he should, and that I should lock the door of the room until the police came."

"Did you notice, as he went towards the door of the room, that his boots left any marks which had not been there before?"

"No."

"Did you observe any marks on the floor near the room, as you yourself entered it?"

"No. Not as I entered it. As I left it, I noticed seven small stains—bloodstains. They appeared to be still wet."

The coroner stared at the witness in some surprise. "You actually counted them?" he asked.

"Oh yes, I counted them."

"You appear, sir," quoted the coroner, "to be an accurate observer."

"Necessity," replied the witness, urbanely, capping the quotation, "has made me one."

"Where did Chrisson go when he left the sitting-room?"

"To the kitchen."

"Along the passage?"

"Yes."

"Did you follow him?"

"Not immediately. About five minutes later."

"Did you notice any stains on the flags of the passage?"

"Yes. Two small stains."

"Did you go into the kitchen?"

"Yes. For a moment only. I saw one or two small wet marks on the floor of the kitchen, near the door."

Constable Bunter stated that he had observed at the time at which he had arrived at the Bower of Bliss on the morning of November 28th, that the boots then worn by Luke Chrisson

had been stained at the toes. He had directed Chrisson's attention to the fact, and had looked at the soles. There was a small quantity of blood—a small stain—on both soles, near the toe, at that time. Chrisson had subsequently changed the boots for another pair. Bunter had examined the pair which he took off, and had found blood, still wet, on the toe-caps and on the welts, at the stitching. He had had no doubt whatever at the time that the stains were bloodstains. The blood had begun to dry, but was still damp. He had not, at the time, examined the boots or shoes of any other person then in the inn, but had done so later in the morning—about five o'clock. He had found no bloodstains on any of the boots he had examined, or on the stairs or in any other room of the inn than the sitting-room and the kitchen. Burgin had left the inn before he had arrived there; so had Mrs. Tanquered and Miss Higgins.

Beyond this the police witnesses refused to go. No traces of blood had been found in the passage between the door of the sitting-room and the front door. It remained obscure why, if the feet that had left behind them the bloodstains found in the car had come out of the sitting-room a short time before, they had left no trace in the passage on their way to the car. To the attendance the coroner's persistence over the matter of the bloodstains in the car appeared in the end fussy and of no real bearing upon the main issue. If this man Burgin, who, it seemed, had looked and behaved like a perfectly respectable and law-abiding person, had had the curiosity to enter the sitting-room to obtain a nearer view of the tragedy—a morbid thing to do, but a natural enough one—what did it matter? True, that involved his having entered the sitting-room before Colonel Gore had locked it up; and *that* involved his having discovered the murder, and

presumably the murderer, before Colonel Gore had done so. But everything pointed to this person's having had a bad scare. Probably he had heard a noise below, come downstairs, gone into the sitting-room, and seen what had occurred. What more easy to suppose than that, in his horror and, perhaps, fright, he had walked incautiously and had contrived to get some blood on his boots? What was more likely than that they could walk a few feet along the passage to the front door without leaving any mark behind, while, in the constant change of position involved by driving a car, they should leave some of that defilement behind on the floor-mat and the clutch-pedal? In any case, it didn't matter a tinker's curse whether they had done so or not. No man in his senses could doubt for a moment that Luke Chrisson and his brother Simon between them had done the job. Burgin and bloodstained boots be blowed.

As the inspector had anticipated, Colonel Gore's evidence proved the *clou* of the morning's entertainment. Even the sensation caused by the disclosure that Louis Tanquered had apparently gone through life with a beltful of uncut diamonds strapped about his waist beneath his clothes, faded as the quiet, clear voice of the principal witness described the dramatic discovery of the elder Chrisson, bloodstained and dazed, with the splintered weapon of murder actually in his hand, crouching on the floor beside his victim by the light of two candles. The only loophole which Colonel Gore left in the deadly story which he had to tell was his statement of his belief that at the time when he had made his tragic discovery, Tanquered had been dead for some little time. But while the jury learned with approval from some remarks of the coroner that Colonel Gore in a long and distinguished military service had had a considerable and close acquaintance

with death by violence, it accepted with reserve the gallant officer's well-meant surmises as to the invasion of *rigor mortis* and to the clotting of blood. Sergeant Hemphill summed up the general feeling in a phrase confided *sotto voce* to Constable Bunter as the witness left the stand.

"That's torn it."

Chrisson himself created the worst of impressions. He had been pretty severely mauled in the tussle of the day before, and had refused to wash or shave or put on a collar that morning. His bristle-covered jowl and dishevelled hair and angry eyes, his surly responses, and a rancorous outburst against the murdered man—an outburst which made brutal allusion to Mrs. Tanquered's infatuation for Boyne—told heavily against him. He denied that, to his knowledge, he had seen his brother on the night of the crime, or had even been aware of his presence in the inn that night. But his monotonous "I can't rightly say" and "I don't remember" hardened the eyes and lips of the jury. Conscious of this, he subsided into cowed silence, and refused to answer any further questions.

So far as could be gathered from the statements of the recaptured runaways, Simon Chrisson had not rejoined them after he had made his supposed escape through the window of the cubbyhole of the tap. At some time or other after they had fled out of the inn, some of them had crept back and had found shelter in one of the cart-sheds in the yard. Alarmed by rats, however, they had wandered off into the darkness again, along the road towards Blackberrow Coombe, strayed across the fields, scattered into twos and threes, and slept under hedges. It was Inspector Shadgold's personal belief that the younger Chrisson had re-entered the house by another window immediately; two, at the back, had been

found partially open. As the door of the tap had been left unlocked, he could have rejoined his brother when the house was quiet. This, however, was merely the inspector's surmise. With that the coroner had nothing to do, naturally.

It took the jury twenty minutes to find that Louis Tanquered had died as the results of injuries caused by blows and other violence inflicted by Luke Chrisson and other persons or person unknown, on the night of Tuesday, November 27th.

Chrisson's comment upon this finding was an unprintable monosyllable. Another hostile demonstration, as he was hurried away to a covered car, was followed by a half-hearted attempt to set fire to the Bower of Bliss. Learning, however, from the abrupt appearance of Boyne's servant at an upper window, his eyes starting out of his head in alarm, that the building still contained his master and himself, the fire-raisers aided the police to extinguish the blaze, and went home satisfied on the whole with the morning's work.

CHAPTER XII

Gore found Mr. James Stanton standing in the bay before the inn, waiting for his son, who had gone in search of their car, parked some distance down the road at the end of the line. Mr. Stanton still looked unwell and depressed, and with a rather casual "Good afternoon, Colonel," turned away as Gore approached him and moved towards the road. He changed his mind, however, stopped, and turned back.

"I haven't had an opportunity of thanking you for your kindness the other night, Colonel." A slight embarrassment made his smile dubious—even insincere. "Foolish of me to have drunk that whisky." He patted the curve of his overcoat. "I'm not the inner man I was, at any rate, I'm afraid."

"Feeling quite fit again now, I hope?"

"Quite, thanks. Quite. By the way, what about your car? Much damage done?"

"Nothing fatal. I expect to have her running in a few days. Deuced odd, you know, that I didn't hear her being pinched. There's the window of my bedroom up there—and you're standing where she stood."

Gore's hand pointed upwards. But his eyes did not accompany the hand. Instead, they gazed with interest at the under surface of the chin which Mr. Stanton raised towards the window indicated. But they were smiling when they met Mr. Stanton's again.

"There was a little thing I wanted to mention to you—a rather curious coincidence which occurred that night, just after you went up to bed. You remember that, after poor

Tanquered collided with you in the passage and let that bottle fall, he went into the sitting-room?"

Mr. Stanton nodded abstractedly. His gaze was down the road. "I remember."

"Well, he was in there for a few minutes in the dark with Cowlishaw. Cowlishaw was sitting by the fire, you remember. I don't think they spoke until Burgin went in with the lamp. But when he did, Cowlishaw said to Tanquered, 'Well, Brazil, do you remember me?' A curious coincidence, wasn't it?"

Mr. Stanton stared in silence. Then he smiled drily.

"*Rather* a curious coincidence, Colonel. Looks as if I wasn't the only one who exceeded his limit that night, eh? Force of imagination—combined with Glenburnie. Well, well, it's the first time I've drunk a murderer's whisky. I sincerely hope it will be the last. I suppose there's no doubt this fellow did it—he and his brother—what?"

Mr. Stanton had turned his head again to look down the road towards the distant figure of his son, engaged in putting up the hood of their car. Receiving no indorsement of his last remark, his head twisted back again somewhat sharply.

"You think so yourself, don't you, Colonel?"

Gore shrugged.

"As far as I can see at the moment, Mr. Stanton, I am extremely likely to hang Chrisson. But if I do, what I know must do it—not what I think."

The curious embarrassment which had lent uneasiness to Mr. Stanton's expression accentuated itself as his smile faded and his face assumed solemnity.

"That's a terrible thing to say."

"It's rather a terrible thing to have to *do*."

"Well, but," asked Mr. Stanton of the universe, after a

pause, "if Chrisson—or the two Chrissons—didn't do it, who did? There's this fellow Burgin, of course. It's foolish of him not to have turned up. By the way, they had an S O S for him on the wireless last night. Of course they'll get him. It may be that he saw the whole thing—or at any rate may be able to clear things up a bit. A horrible business, anyhow. Horrible. We shall have a wet run home, I'm afraid. It's coming on. Good afternoon, Colonel."

As Gore stood looking after the car which carried away the Stantons into the thickening rain, Dr. Cowlishaw came out of the yard. It may have been merely an effect of that imagination with which Mr. Stanton had charged Colonel Gore, but it appeared to him that at sight of him Dr. Cowlishaw also evinced a strong disposition to avoid him. His manner stiffened noticeably as Gore, with his most winning smile in evidence, overtook him.

"I wonder, Dr. Cowlishaw, if you would very kindly clear up a little point for me. Am I right in believing that on Tuesday night I heard you address Mr. Tanquered as 'Brazil'?"

Cowlishaw's large glasses were baffling in their regard. His tone was surprised.

"Heard *me* address Mr. Tanquered as—as what?"

"By the name 'Brazil.' The words you used were, I think, 'Well, Brazil, do you remember me?' "

Cowlishaw stepped backward a little as if to estimate better from a slightly greater distance the purpose of an inquiry which for him held no meaning.

"I don't understand, sir," he replied, coldly. "Why should I address Mr. Tanquered by any name but his own? At any rate, the fact is that I did nothing of the sort."

"Then I may take it that I was mistaken?"

"Absolutely."

Gore took a card from his case, scribbled an address on it and a telephone number, and placed it in Dr. Cowlishaw's unwelcoming hand.

"That address will find me for the next few days. If, by any chance, you should change your mind on the point, perhaps you will very kindly let me know—or Inspector Shadgold know."

"Of what interest is it to Inspector Shadgold ——" the other began, sharply. He broke off with a gesture. "I have told you that you are absolutely mistaken."

Gore blew his nose genially. "You see, Dr. Cowlishaw, you told us in the sitting-room that evening that the reason which had brought you up into this part of the world was a nephew at the Sanatorium—that you had been to see him that afternoon—that he had had a bad go of hemorrhage, and that you had therefore decided to stay over the night at the Bower of Bliss and go over to see him again next day. Now, in point of fact, you never went near the Sanatorium that day, nor was, nor is, any nephew of yours a patient there. You told a different story to the police. You cut out the part about having been to the Sanatorium on Tuesday, and said that your intention was to go there to see a patient on Wednesday. Today, at the inquest, you gave a third version. You said that you had come up here intending to make some inquiries at the Sanatorium, for the information of a friend of yours who thought of going to it for treatment. You see yourself that an inquiring mind—I am afflicted with one of that unfortunate kind—is very likely, quite naturally, to wonder a little why you *did* come to the Bower of Bliss. Now if, by chance, Inspector Shadgold hears of those three versions of yours—he has heard two of them already—he also will

begin to wonder a little, won't he? If he gets it into his head, for instance, that you had known Tanquered before—under a different name—and that you had come up here for the purpose of renewing your acquaintance with him—— However, I mustn't keep you standing in the rain. You have my addresses, and the telephone numbers. Good afternoon."

"What have you been up to now?" demanded Dr. Melhuish as Gore rejoined him.

"Third Degree. Mind if I just run up and say howdy to Mr. Boyne?"

Melhuish agreeing with resignation, Gore made his way up the desolate little staircase, at the head of which he was met by Boyne's servant, a pallid, sleek young man who had evidently not yet quite recovered from his recent alarm. Assured that the danger of his being burned alive had really passed, he retired into his master's bedroom to announce the visitor, and returned to say that Mr. Boyne would see him for a few minutes, but was not allowed to talk much.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Boyne did most of the talking during the few minutes. Rather a nice-looking chap at close quarters, if at the moment rather a wan-looking one; conceited, perhaps, but intelligent. His conversational technique was the usual clipped staccato of his kind. Awfully good of Gore to look him up. . . . He felt absolutely fit, thanks. . . . Frightful bore being stuck in that moldy old pub. He expected to shove out next day. . . . Rotten business this about old Tanquered, wasn't it? . . . How had the inquest worked out? . . . Well, it couldn't have worked out any other how, could it? . . . Yes, thanks, a nurse came in at night. . . . Ugliest woman he had ever seen. . . . Going to rain like billy-oh, by the look of it. His stock of small-talk running

dry, he subsided into silence, and contemplated his visitor with an unconcealed hope of his speedy departure.

"I don't expect," Gore said, "that you feel like discussing business matters just at present. If there's anything you think I can do for you, drop me a line at any time."

Boyne frowned, then appeared to recall, with an effort, that at some time in a crowded past he had made a business appointment with some one called Gore.

"Oh, *that!*" He smiled. "Oh yes. Of course. Glad you spoke of it. I'm afraid I'd forgotten all about it. Awfully good of you to come down, you know. You must have felt rather bored when I arrived on a sheep-hurdle. Worst of it is, I'm afraid I've dragged you down all this way for nothing. Perfectly idiotic. But I found out, after I wrote to you, that we—that I was dead off the track. I needn't say that any fees . . . No time like the present." He turned to the valet. "Give me my check-book, Lumley, will you?"

Smilingly Gore persuaded him to countermand this order.

"You owe me nothing, Mr. Boyne. I'm really on holiday down here. Hope you'll soon pick up. You had a lucky escape. I was the chap who tried to pull you up, you know."

"Oh!" said Boyne. "Were you?" He stared. "Well—there's no use in talking about it now. So sorry I can't even offer you a drink. But it's all locked up here, my chap tells me. Good-by. Do let me square up for your traveling expenses, won't you? . . . Well, it's frightfully good of you to pop in. By-by."

But there was some one who did want to talk to Colonel Gore, it seemed. The servant followed him out on to the landing and shut the door of the bedroom behind him.

"Sorry to hear your car was damaged, sir," he said in his smooth, gentlemanly way. He coughed. "I called up here

that night, as no doubt you are aware, sir, to inquire for Mr. Boyne. I saw your car standing with Mrs. Tanquered's before the door. And it just passed into my mind at the time, the way things come into your mind, sir, how easy it would have been for anyone to get away with one of them. Funny they should both have been taken, sir, wasn't it?"

The light on the landing was of the poorest. But it was quite sufficient to reveal the fact that this gentlemanly young man had something which he wanted to say. His quickly-moving eyes scanned Gore's face rather anxiously; his voice was carefully lowered.

"You saw no one about that time, I suppose?" Gore said.

"No, sir. No one outside the inn, if that's what you mean."

"That was about half-past eleven?"

"Yes, sir." The valet coughed again, took a final view of Gore's face and the bedroom door, and made up his mind. "I understand, sir, from the constable who was on duty here—Bunter, I believe his name is—I understand that you suggested to the inspector that Mrs. Tanquered's car had been moved from where you saw it, and that you thought some one had been using it before this person, Burgin, went away with it?"

"I believe some such idea did occur to me, yes."

"The reason I mention it, sir—you'll excuse me if I ask it to be quite between ourselves, at all events for the present——"

"Certainly."

"The reason I mention it, sir, is that I saw Mrs. Tanquered's car again that night. I mean after I had seen it outside this inn. I saw it up near the gates of Danmore Lodge, standing

in a field, near the gate. That was"—the valet coughed again—"about half-past one."

A faint color warmed the man's pale cheeks as Gore contemplated him thoughtfully.

"Have you told the police about this?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"Well, sir, the fact is, there are private reasons why I shouldn't wish it known—well—to the police—or to anyone else what brought me up there at that hour. It might be a very serious matter for me, you see, sir—owing to Mr. Boyne being, as perhaps you know, sir, very intimate with Mrs. Tanquered."

"Suppose you tell *me*," suggested Gore, offering his cigarette case fraternally. "It won't go beyond me—until you tell me it may."

"Well, the fact is, sir—after leaving here, instead of going home, like a fool I went up to —— There's a g——a young woman employed there, sir ——" A rather unpleasant smile completed the explanation of Mr. Lumley's midnight strayings.

"I was coming away when I saw the car, sir. There's a short cut from the back of the house to the road across the gardens and two fields. The car was in the field beside the road, behind the hedge, and the gate of the field was shut. No one passing along the road would have seen it."

"You're sure it was Mrs. Tanquered's car?"

"Oh, absolutely, sir. I've seen it often enough down at our place."

"You saw no one near it?"

"Not a soul, sir. The lights were off, of course, sir."

"And then—you went home?"

"Yes, sir."

"How? Past this inn?"

"Yes, sir. That was my only way. Funnily enough, sir, when I was a bit down the road towards East Chuley, after passing by here, I thought I heard a car behind me, going along the Shippen road. Probably I was right, too, sir."

"Probably you were," Gore agreed.

"What do you think I ought to do, sir? You see, it's a very awkward position for *me*—and the young woman, sir—if it came out."

"It may be very awkward for other people if it comes out," Gore reflected. "Suppose we leave it until this fellow Burgin turns up. If he tells your story about the car in the field for you—well, you won't have to tell it. If he doesn't—well, I'm afraid you will. You've told no one so far, except myself?"

"No one, sir. Of course the—er—the young woman knows that I was up there, sir."

"I gathered that," Gore replied drily. "Very well, Lumley. We'll leave it at that, then."

Visibly relieved both by his act of confession and by the postponement, possibly indefinite, of the necessity to repeat it to less sympathetic ears, the young man tended Gore down the stairs, striking unnecessary matches for his benefit.

"Thank you very much, sir, I'm sure. There's a broken step just there, sir; mind it, sir. If you should happen to go up that way you'll see the gate I mean. It's the first field after you pass a clump of trees on a little hill by themselves, on your right, sir, as you go up. Pine trees, I think they are, sir. You can't mistake it, sir. Thank you very much indeed, sir. Good afternoon, sir."

Such light as filtered up the stairs from the open front

door was suddenly cut off. The inspector's overcoated bulk appeared, his head turning from side to side in search of something or some one.

"Ah, there you are, Colonel. I was told you'd come in here. Miss Higgins is outside. She wants to see you for a moment." He lowered his tone as Gore reached him. "Mrs. Tanquered has had a breakdown—some sort of a nervous attack—pretty bad, as far as I can make out. Miss Higgins wants Dr. Melhuish to go up and see her, I think. Been paying Mr. Boyne a visit, sir? Hope that row in the yard didn't upset him? By the way, we've got some news of Burgin. A man answering his description was seen early on Wednesday morning near Eagle Crag, and afterwards had breakfast at the White Horse in Hatchbridge. After that he went to Wells by the first 'bus and caught a London train. So I expect to have the pleasure of making his acquaintance very shortly, all going well. I thought it might interest you to hear that we're on his track."

CHAPTER XIII

Miss Higgins, much perturbed, was awaiting Gore's appearance with anxiety, seated, not in the celebrated two-seater, which was in the hands of the police, but in a big straight-eight saloon.

"Good afternoon. Do you think you can possibly persuade Dr. Melhuish to come up and see Mrs. Tanquered? Mrs. Greston would be so grateful. She has no confidence whatever in poor old Dr. Sharp, and Mrs. Tanquered simply can't bear him. He's such a grubby poor old thing. Do try to persuade Dr. Melhuish to come up. That is, if he hasn't gone back to Westmouth."

Impossible to resist the appeal of those lovely gray eyes and that silvery voice. Even Dr. Melhuish's grimness relaxed as he listened to Miss Higgins's account of the sudden crisis which had produced Mrs. Tanquered's alarming condition. When the saloon swung round to return to Danmore Lodge, Melhuish's Bentley followed sedately in its cyclonic wake.

"Cerebral meningitis at fourteen," reflected Gore's companion as they left the Shippen road and turned right. "Nervous breakdown just before her marriage. Nervous breakdown just after. No child. Nerves ever since. Probably dopes. Um. The perfectly unnecessary she-thing—post-war model. Ever met Mrs. Greston? Charming woman—if she hadn't seventy thousand a year. She called me in once as a second opinion upon her appendix, and was very much annoyed when I suggested castor-oil. Wonder if she's forgotten that I was right?"

Two miles of an ever-rising switchback, a typical Mendip road, narrow, bordered by low stone walls, and bounded on either side by steeply curving sweeps of bracken, broken here and there by the outcrops of the dolomite and clumps of pine wood, brought them to their destination. The house was a sturdy, two-storied, sixteenth-century building, with mullioned windows, backed by a row of trim modern stables and flanked by a large garage. The discipline of the household was evidently suffering from its owners' misfortunes. Failing to obtain any response to their second assault on knocker and bell, Melhuish and Gore passed in through the open front door and stood waiting in the hall until Miss Higgins, who had driven the saloon into the yard, rejoined them.

She apologized for the remissness of the servants. One maid had given notice and departed immediately after the appearance of the police at Danmore Lodge. Another was leaving that afternoon. The third was at the moment engaged in conversation with a groom in the yard. Impossible to keep servants in such an out-of-the-way place. She invited Gore into a sitting-room off the hall, and conducted the doctor upstairs to his patient.

Having exhausted the *Times* of yesterday and several illustrateds of various ages, Gore strayed to a window to look out at a couple of fine hunters which had just come in from exercise. A sharply-twanging feminine voice, humming the refrain of a fox-trot with intonations clearly borrowed from the gramophone, approached along the hall. A smartly-dressed maid, bold-eyed and silk-stockinged, sauntered into the room, munching sweets, and, not perceiving the visitor at the window, went straight to a mirror over the fireplace and surveyed herself with concentrated attention while she chewed

and sucked noisily. In the middle of this orgy of self-complacency she caught sight of Gore's reflection, and swung round towards the original with a smirking giggle, the stick of lip-salve which she had taken from her apron pocket still halfway to her lips.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed. "You must excuse me. I didn't know there was anyone in here."

"Don't let me disturb you," smiled Gore, winningly. "Though it's a pity to put that stuff on them, isn't it?"

The experienced hazel eyes decided that this sporting-looking if slightly elderly old bird with the eyeglass and the twinkle would beguile an idle moment. Their owner gave him a devastating glance from their most effective angle.

"Is that so?" she inquired, encouragingly. "Are you afraid it might come off?"

The old bird made a shot. This was the maid who was staying. And Mr. Lumley's inamorata, it was to be supposed, would remain in his vicinity.

"What does your friend Mr. Lumley think about it?"

She bridled, reddened, relapsed into suspicious naturalness.

"What do you mean? My friend? Who told you Mr. Lumley was a friend of mine, I'd like to know?"

Colonel Gore extended a forefinger, and then laid it lightly against his nose. The eye that didn't wear an eyeglass winked.

"I wonder," he said. "Don't be alarmed, my dear. I never spoil sport. What pretty legs you have, and what pretty stockings!" A slip of paper appeared dexterously in his hand and was folded neatly. "Expensive things, silk stockings, I suppose? And they soil so easily, don't they?"

The girl, divided between uneasiness and conviction of the power of her own charms, hung between a frown and a smile as her fingers closed on the note.

"Here—what's this for?" she asked, in affected surprise.

"For a good little girl. I'm sure you are a good little girl."

"Well, what do you want to give me this money for?"

"Just a little information, my dear. Strictly between ourselves. You didn't get to sleep until about half-past one on Tuesday night—or rather, Wednesday morning—did you?"

The hazel eyes narrowed. There was no reply.

"You were awake at half-past one?"

"What business of yours is that?"

"Now, now, my dear, don't be nervous. There's nothing to be frightened about. Just tell me this—did you hear anyone moving about the house round that time—or afterwards? I mean, after Mr. Lumley had gone away?"

The girl retreated towards the door, pale, now, beneath her clumsily-applied war paint.

"Are you a detective?"

"Gracious! no, my dear. Merely an inquisitive old buffer who wants a little information. Then—you *did* hear some one moving about?"

"Yes, I did. But I can't tell you who it was."

"Just tell me what you heard. You were in your own room?"

"Yes. Me and cook sleep upstairs. Some one came down the stairs just after Albert—just after half-past one. I don't know where they went or who they were, but I'm certain they came down the stairs, whoever it was."

"Sure about the time?"

"Oh yes. I heard the big clock in the hall strike the half-past, and a moment after I heard the stairs give a creak. There's one stair you can't go down or up without it creaking as if it would split. Whoever it was didn't go up again.

Because I listened for them to go until after the clock struck two."

"You've no idea who it was?"

"Unless it was one of the men up to tricks with one of the other girls. The other two's rooms is upstairs. They might have, on account of Missus being away and Miss Higgins."

"There was no one in the house, then, except the servants, at the time—and this person you think you heard?"

"Mrs. Greston, Mrs. Tanquered's mother, was here. She came from Westmouth on the Monday before Mrs. Tanquered got back. But it couldn't have been her I heard. She can't walk downstairs unless she has some one to help her, on account of her bad leg."

"Which flight is the creaking stair on?"

"The short one—the middle one. There's three of them. The creaker is the third stair of the middle one. It goes up to what they call the annexe, where Mrs. Tanquered's bedroom and sitting-room and bathroom are."

"Any other bedrooms there?"

"No."

"So that, if you really heard some one on that flight of stairs, whoever it was must have been coming down from one of those three rooms—Mrs. Tanquered's bedroom or sitting-room or bathroom?"

"That's right. We always know when she's coming down from her room. You can hear that stair all over the house."

By a curious coincidence a loud, sharp crack from somewhere upstairs followed this remark. The maid moved to the door quickly.

"There it goes. That'll be Miss Higgins. Ta for this. Mind you don't let anyone know you and me've been having this little chat." The hazel-eyed young woman waved the old bird's gift amicably and disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV

A MEASURED voice questioned her in the hall.

"Where is Colonel Gore?"

"There is a gentleman in the large sitting-room, 'm. I don't know his name."

Instead of Miss Higgins, light on her feet as thistledown in the breeze, there appeared a stately lady moving, though her skirts did not reach her shins, as if a train followed her. With her came a whole atmosphere of almost forgotten traditions. She did not so much come into the room as make an entrance on a stage of which its other occupant was a spectator. Thirty-five years ago Mrs. Greston had been a beauty of note; at fifty-five she was so handsome as to produce an effect of unreality, an effect enhanced by her conversational method, which was rather declamation than mere talking. She advanced with the aid of a crutched ebony stick, and surveyed Gore through a gold-and-tortoise-shell lorgnette.

"How do you do? You wonder, perhaps, who I am. I am Mrs. Tanquered's mother, Mrs. Greston. I learned from Miss Higgins that you were waiting for Dr. Melhuish. Won't you allow me to offer you some lunch? You have been at the inquest all the morning, have you not?"

"Many thanks, but Melhuish and I lunched on sandwiches. I'm extremely sorry to hear that Mrs. Tanquered has been so upset. This has been a very terrible experience for her."

Mrs. Greston seated herself and, apparently satisfied with her audience's capacity of appreciating her, lowered her lorgnette and used it to express a gesture of desolation.

"Terrible beyond expression. Dr. Melhuish is of opinion that she must leave here at once. I entirely agree. She must make a complete break with all these terrible associations. I shall take her up with me to Wraxton Court, my house at Wraxton. You have heard of it, perhaps. It is regarded as one of the most beautiful Tudor houses in England. There she will find peace and rest and the voices of old servants whom she has known since she was a child. For me, unfortunately, she has never held any affection. But it is my trust that, in this hour of trial, she will turn to me."

The lorgnette made transition with calm dignity.

"Dr. Melhuish has informed me of the result of the inquest. Dreadful and shocking as the whole affair has been, it is at least some small consolation to know that there can be no possible escape for one, at least, of those who murdered my son-in-law. Would it not be prudent to remove your overcoat? Otherwise you will derive no benefit from it when you do go out into the cold air again. You prefer to keep it on? I seem unable to persuade you to accept anything, even good advice. Do you mind closing that door? . . . Thank you so much."

As Gore, having complied with her request, returned towards her, her stick indicated a chair close to her own.

"I am extremely glad to have found this opportunity of meeting you, even under such deplorable circumstances. Will you forgive me if I ask whether you have had any conversation with Mr. Boyne since my son-in-law's death?"

"Yes. I saw him for a few moments just now, down at the inn. He is still there."

"How dreadful for the poor fellow! I think perhaps that I ought to say that Mr. Boyne entered into negotiations with you at my request. He perhaps told you so?"

A curious coincidence—which was to appear more curious presently.

"No. Mr. Boyne's letters to me mentioned merely that some third person might possibly be present at the interview which I was to have had with him on Tuesday afternoon."

Mrs. Greston's eyebrows performed surprise.

"*Was* to have had? You did not have an interview with him?"

"No."

"So that you are not aware of the nature of the matter which he desired to discuss with you?"

"No."

"Did Mr. Boyne make any reference to the matter when you saw him this afternoon?"

"Yes. He said he had discovered that there was nothing which he wanted to consult me about. To use his own words, that he 'had got off the track.'"

Mrs. Greston sat back in her chair and looked at the fire with profound consideration for so long that Gore began to suspect her of decline into an after-lunch snooze.

"I suppose Mr. Boyne is right," she said at length, "and that there is nothing to be gained, perhaps—now—by going any further in the matter. My unfortunate daughter has had sufficient tragedy in her life already." The ebony stick rapped the hearth-rug impatiently—with the impatience of the stage. "Well, for the worst of it she has no one to thank but herself. She married against my wishes—against my advice, as she had always done everything. And this is the end of it: her husband killed in a pot-house brawl by a couple of lunatics—her name bandied about—Mr. Boyne's name dishonored. Though I think it only just and fair to Mr. Boyne to say that I regard him as a young man of the

highest principles and of the most fastidious honor of character. But *he* is, none the less, an additional reason why my daughter must leave this house—this neighborhood—at once. You had met her before that fatal visit of hers to this place—this inn, or public house, or whatever it calls itself?"

"I had seen Mrs. Tanquered the day before, in Linwood."

"So she has told me. Naturally, her curiosity, if I may say so, was aroused by finding you at the inn."

"Really?"

"She has told me so—though I am seldom honored with her confidence. She asked me if I knew your name, as she understood your family lived in Somerset. I told her, of course, that, though I had never had the pleasure of meeting him personally, I had known your father by name very well. I mention this interest of hers in you, really, to discover whether you mentioned to her—or to Miss Higgins—the object of your visit to the inn. I sincerely trust not."

Reassured upon this point, which appeared to cause her an anxiety approaching reality, Mrs. Greston relapsed into her absorbed contemplation of the fire. Discreetly Gore inspected the perfect profile presented to him. This good lady, also, was trying to make up her mind to say something a little difficult. Now, what?

For a moral certainty, something concerning her son-in-law. It was she who had induced Boyne to make that appointment at the inn. Both she and Boyne had really given the same reason for considering no further action necessary; both had regarded it as unnecessary "now." "Now" could only have one meaning—in view of Tanquered's death. Something, then, concerning Tanquered was to have been the subject of the interview canceled by Boyne's accident.

Clearly, Mrs. Greston regretted less the death of her son-

in-law than the scandal of his death. Clearly, also, she had disapproved of her daughter's marriage to him. What reply would she give to a very direct question concerning him?

"I wonder, Mrs. Greston, if you would gratify my curiosity upon one point. Did your son-in-law at any time use the name 'Brazil' for any purpose?"

With some gratification, Gore perceived that he had diagnosed Mrs. Greston's real purpose correctly. She had simply been waiting for a becoming cue. Her eyes, her lips, the slow turn of her rounded white neck, her voice, her long ringed fingers, the ebony cane—all played their part in making the most of a dramatic moment.

"Yes," she said, "he did. He married my daughter under an assumed name. His real name—at least, a name by which he had been known previously—was Brazil. You knew that?"

"I suspected it."

Mrs. Greston went without haste through all the motions of stage surprise: raised her eyebrows, rounded her eyes, sat back a little more in her chair; allowed thirty seconds to elapse before she spoke again.

"But—how? Who can have told you? Who can have given you even the slightest ground for such a suspicion? Not my daughter. She has not the slightest suspicion. No one save myself, I hope, and the person who gave me the information—no one else, not even Mr. Boyne, has the slightest suspicion. That, at least is my sincerest hope."

Gore considered a possibility rapidly, and dismissed it, yet asked the cautious question:

"Would it be too much to ask you your informant's name? The reason is that, to my knowledge, some one else does know that your son-in-law's name was, at one time, Brazil."

Mrs. Greston, too, very nearly perturbed now, considered, then decided upon complete confidence.

"Colonel Karslake—the son of a very old friend of mine, General Karslake—was my informant. You know him, perhaps?"

"I've come across him, yes. He's rather senior to me. A mighty *shikari*. I'm rather wondering if he came across Tanquered in Africa."

Mrs. Greston bowed her head solemnly.

"Yes. He saw my son-in-law arrested on the platform of a railway station in South Africa, and marched along it, handcuffed to two natives from whom he had tried to buy stolen diamonds. I suppose—seeing a white man in such a position—Colonel Karslake had the curiosity to ask who he was. At any rate, he was told that his name was Brazil and that he had been dealing with natives who had contrived to smuggle diamonds out of the mines. It was known that he had been doing this for a long time, and they had watched him. The platform at this particular station had been a favorite place of his, it seems; it was a junction where the natives leaving employment at the mines changed trains."

"When did this happen?"

"The year before my daughter's marriage."

"She married—when?"

"In 1926."

"In England?"

"Yes. But she met her husband in South Africa—at Durban. He then called himself Tanquered, and told her that he had been farming in Rhodesia. To this day, I have no idea how she met him. They came home on the same boat, and were married a couple of months after they landed

—before I had even seen him or had had time to make any inquiries. Madness—blind madness."

"Your daughter had been living out there?"

"No. Her health had been very poor, and Sir Peter Wilkins, to whom I took her, recommended a long sea voyage. She had a fancy to go to South Africa, mainly, I think, because as a child she had been very fond of a book called *Jess,* by, I think, Rider Haggard. I engaged a highly-recommended nurse—Miss Higgins, whom you have met—to accompany her. I have nothing but the highest praise for Miss Higgins, who is a most efficient and intelligent young woman. But I have never since ceased to regret, bitterly, that I did not accompany my daughter myself, or at least send some one of more mature age and greater experience of the world to watch over her. However, regrets are useless now. Won't you be persuaded to take at least a glass of wine—or some coffee?"

But Gore contented himself with a gracious permission to smoke a cigarette. Mrs. Greston returned to Colonel Karslake. After a year or so of slaughter, this passionate sportsman had returned to England and, learning presently of Miss Greston's marriage, had sent her some horns as a belated wedding present. But it had not been until the September of the present year that he had met Mrs. Greston's son-in-law, on the occasion of a visit to some relatives in Somerset. On the terrace at Wraxton Court he had come face to face with the man whom he had seen, handcuffed to two Kaffirs, marched off the platform at Standenburg Junction. He had done the obvious thing—endured an introduction without a blink, and at the first opportunity informed Mrs. Greston of the circumstances under which he had last seen him.

Since nearly three years had elapsed since the Standenburg Episode, Mrs. Greston had clung to the hope of a possible mistake. But as the weeks passed, it had seemed to her necessary to make certain of the truth, however distressing. And so, ultimately, she had decided to have independent investigation made into her son-in-law's past history. Boyne's enlistment in this project had apparently been due to two causes: the first that, quite candidly, Mrs. Greston distrusted private detectives of all kinds profoundly, and thought it better that a male should deal with any employed; the second, that Boyne himself had expressed to her in confidence, on the occasion of one of her rare visits to her son-in-law's house at Chanton Mendip, his opinion that Mrs. Tanquered's marriage had been a terrible mistake and that her husband was—Mrs. Greston's beautifully-finished lips grimaced as she repeated the epithet—"an absolute rotter."

"He is dead," she summed up. "I suppose the only thing left is to hope that my unfortunate daughter will never know the truth about him. Colonel Karslake I can trust never to breathe a word of it to anyone while he lives. But—this person of whom you speak—who can it be? Some one you have met up here—within the past few days? Not—not that man Burgin?"

Briefly Gore related the incident by the fireside of the inn's sitting-room and Cowlishaw's quite unconvincing disclaimers.

"What is this man?" Mrs. Greston asked.

"Apparently a perfectly respectable person, employed at the Royal College of Geology and Mineralogy."

"He stayed at the inn that night?"

"Yes."

"Surely a curious place to select to stay at this time of

the year? A most unlikely place to select without some particular reason—unless, perhaps, he was engaged upon geological work in the neighborhood?"

"So far as I know, not."

"If he knew my son-in-law as 'Brazil,' he must have known him in South Africa—perhaps was associated with him in these illegal dealings with the natives. At any rate, it appears to me very odd that——"

Whither these feminine intuitions would have leaped from that point Gore was not to have an opportunity of knowing. Melhuish and Miss Higgins entered the room just then, and the conversation concerned itself with Mrs. Tanquered until the visitors left. But during the drive back through the rain to Westmouth Gore's own thoughts strayed somewhat farther along the path which Mrs. Greston's had taken.

It seemed to him now fairly safe to conclude that Cowlishaw had known Tanquered before his marriage and, probably, in Africa. That, of course, suggested various possibilities—one of which Mrs. Greston had put into words.

Whatever had brought Cowlishaw to the Mendip district, it had not been any intention of visiting the Sanatorium. That had been camouflage—for whose benefit among his fellow-guests, it would be interesting to know—as interesting as to know why he had considered camouflage necessary. In any case, it seemed pretty certain that some definite purpose had brought him to this very out-of-the-way part of the world, and that this purpose was connected with Tanquered. The nearest house to the Bower of Bliss was Tanquered's house. Had Tanquered not happened to have gone to the inn, a quarter of an hour's walk would have brought Cowlishaw to Danmore Lodge.

Supposing that Cowlishaw had known Tanquered at a

time when he was interested—legally or illegally—in diamonds, there was the fact—possibly so explained, otherwise unexplained so far—that a diamond of considerable value had been found in Tanquered's hand. And Cowlishaw had been one of the two people who had been shut up with him in the sitting-room of the inn during the hours immediately preceding his death.

One of the two. Where the other fitted into this meeting of old acquaintances seemed still matter for surmise. What had been Burgin's "business" with Tanquered? Why, on first seeing Cowlishaw at the inn, had Burgin shown, if not actual alarm, the plainest of suspicion and vigilant distrust? Had Burgin, too, been connected with Tanquered's interest in diamonds in South Africa, and had he known, or known of, Cowlishaw out there?

So far Gore's speculations had carried him at this stage—speculations which he himself was disposed to distrust. The truth was that, in the face of the facts which had told so heavily against Luke Chrisson—facts to which he himself had been the principal witness—he could not convince himself that Chrisson had had any hand in Tanquered's death. He had the strongest of unwillingness to put a rope round Chrisson's unwashed neck. But that, naturally, was no reason why he should desire to put one round some one else's—a feat to which every new fact which he raked out seemed to encourage him.

For, if there was one thing of which he felt absolutely certain in the affair, it was that the same hands which had taken Tanquered's life had attempted James Stanton's. He had seen James Stanton's face when, directed by his feeble moaning, he had gone to his room; he had seen beneath his chin that morning the traces of the attempt which had only

just failed of its purpose—the purpose which, in the case of its other victim, it had achieved. Melhuish had no doubt whatever that Tanquered had died by suffocation; Gore had none that James Stanton had barely escaped death by the same means. What was the common factor, the connecting link between these two men? The name "Brazil"—the link that connected to those two men a third—Cowlishaw.

However, the senior partner of Gore & Tolley's was well aware that a man's share of jobs awaited him in London. And, in point of fact, he was packing his bag before dinner that evening, with the intention of catching the night mail up, when Dr. Melhuish's man summoned him to the telephone. The call was from Dr. Cowlishaw, who was staying at Westmouth's "Grand" and would be obliged if Colonel Gore could go down and see him about nine o'clock that night. Colonel Gore said, "With pleasure," and removed from his suitcase the very doggy pyjamas which he had just placed in it.

CHAPTER XV

Cowlishaw was waiting for him in the lounge of the hotel, but took him up to his bedroom on the top floor. There he lighted a jet-black meerschaum pipe, waved his guest into the one comfortable chair, and seated himself on the bed. Any hostility which his manner had displayed that morning had altogether disappeared. His air was that of a man who viewed with tolerant amusement a life which had always succeeded in getting the better of him. His eyes were very candid when he removed his large spectacles; despite his age and his physical largeness, he had an effect of almost childish simplicity. His opening remarks revealed his temperament.

"I am one of those absurd people," he smiled, "whom anything in the nature of hostility—or ill will—or dislike—on the part of other people—especially if they are entire strangers to me—distresses acutely. If some one happens to jostle me in the street, although I know it has been done quite unintentionally, I cannot persuade myself that I did not appear to this person the kind of man who may be jostled with impunity. And perhaps for a couple of hours afterwards this thought keeps recurring to my mind and depresses me. Absurd, isn't it? But incurable now, of course. Well, since this morning you've been worrying me. I don't know whether you meant to, or whether you entertain any ill will against me. But I feel that I've got to have a chat with you about this business and make it quite clear to you that I am neither a liar nor a murderer. At the moment, I

hope quite mistakenly, I rather suspect that you believe me to be both."

"No, no, Dr. Cowlishaw. You mustn't run away with that idea. Nor must you put me down as an ill-natured person. Suppose we get my position in the matter right, first of all. To begin with, my only interest in the business, professionally, is that I am looking for some one named 'Brazil,' and that I know for a fact now that Tanquered's real name was Brazil. As I believed that I had heard you address him by that name, I thought it possible that you might be able to give me some information which might be of help. Of help to me personally, also. As you know, I am the chief witness against Chrisson. I don't believe that Chrisson murdered Tanquered—or Brazil. If you can give me any information to support me in that disbelief, I shall be very grateful to you, as you will easily understand."

"I'm afraid I can't help you in that way," Cowlishaw said, visibly soothed. "But I can admit that I know that Tanquered's name was Brazil and that you were quite right—I addressed him by the name. A childish impulse. I wanted to give him a sudden jolt-up. I've been wanting to do that to him for several years. I went down there to do it to him."

"You knew him in South Africa, then?"

"Yes. To my cost."

"He got into trouble out there, didn't he?"

"Yes. So I believe. That, however, was some time after I had lost sight of him. I. D. B.—I rather think, however, that he wangled out of that. At any rate, I heard that he was cutting a dash in Durban afterwards, when Miss Greston met him. I suppose that that diamond you found in his

hand gave you the idea that, if I knew him as Brazil, I had probably been mixed up with his games out there?"

Gore smiled. "It's a wicked world, you know, Dr. Cowlishaw. I admit that idea did occur to me."

His host puffed reflectively for some little time in silence.

"As a matter of fact, I once had a deal in diamonds with Brazil—quite a big deal. But that was the only one. I'm as much in the dark as to that stone you found in his hand as—I presume—you are. That is to say, as to why he had it in his hand. I know all about the stone itself. It is—or rather, was once—my property, together with about a hundred and fifty others like it. Brazil stole the lot from me. That was the deal."

"Sounds rather one-sided," Gore commented. "But possibly interesting."

"Interesting? Well, yes, I suppose that's how it would strike other people. Care to hear the story? It's long—but it will explain things. You've been in Africa, you told us the other night. Ever been in Namaqualand?"

"No. I never got so far west."

"You missed nothing. I was at Port Nolloth in 1914, working for a German mining syndicate that had its headquarters there. I ought to tell you that I'm half German, half Scots. Copper they were principally interested in. My job was a sort of roving commission—most of the time across the Orange in Great Namaqualand—German Southwest, as it was then. God's last bit—nothing for ever and ever. I and a fellow called Selzz used to stray about there for months at a stretch, with a string of Totties, wishing we were dead and pretending we were looking for copper. We never found any. But in the end I did find something.

"One day Selzz woke me up just before sunrise, and said,

'Look,' and drew a razor across his throat. That finished me. I buried him and made a bee-line south for the river. We sighted it pretty late in the afternoon, five days later, and, as we had been going hell-for-leather, the boys struck and refused to go any further that day. They got nasty in the end, and finally I left them to it and went on alone. All I took in the way of luggage was a small haversack, a tin of beef and some biscuits, and my water bottle. I reckoned that that way I should just reach the river, with luck, by dark. I knew there was a fort somewhere along there, and I remember well thinking, as I went along, that I might drink beer before I slept. I didn't.

"You've got to think of Salisbury Plain, without the trees and without the roads, and multiplied until your multiplication gives out. One cursed bare swell, absolutely the same as ten thousand others. On I went—like a flea on an eiderdown that never stopped—until I came to something different.

"I suppose the river was still about seven miles south of me then—running, of course, nearly west and east. This thing that I came on, quite suddenly, was a sort of ravine, pretty wide—a hundred yards or so across in places, I should say—running northwest and southeast, cut out of the scrub. What struck me first as funny about it was that the floor of it was covered thickly with sand and rubble. It was getting dark by that time. But that set me thinking, and I climbed up onto a bit of a rise in one of the sides of the ditch, and saw that it reached right down to the river one way, and ran off for a couple of miles or so the other way—northwest—where it seemed to come to an end. I was dog-tired, however, and it seemed as good a place as any to doss down in. So I turned in, and tried not to think about the beer some one else was having.

"Before I got down to it, I scooped together a lot of the sand to make a mattress, weeding out the rubble. As a matter of fact, I slept for ten hours on end. When I woke up, the first thing my eyes fell on was a little clump of greenish pebbles lying, just like eggs in a nest, close together, in the hollow I had scooped the sand and stuff out of to make my bed. I was so lazy and so sleepy still that I suppose I blinked at them for a good half-hour before I took the trouble to reach out my hand and pick them up. When I saw what they were, however, I got out of bed quickly enough. I suppose that little nest was worth something round ten thousand pounds.[1]

"Naturally, I set to work to grub round in the sand for some more. Without moving from the spot where I began turning the stuff up, I collected in about a quarter of an hour enough of them to fill your hat twice over. Some were only a couple of inches down, a few lying on top, but most of them were about eight inches under the rubble. As it happened, those I found first—after the little nest that started me—were all small. But after I'd moved on a couple of yards, I came on a whopping big fellow. That made me greedy. I wanted nothing but big ones then. I kept on scratching in the stuff like a mad hen until I had filled my knapsack. It didn't take me more than a couple of hours—and even then I hadn't moved more than twenty yards from where I started. You'll find it hard to swallow it, but it's gospel truth. That ditch was fuller of diamonds than a tinker's dog of fleas.

"Just out of curiosity, I walked about a quarter of a mile down it, and did a bit of digging. Just the same thing—

[1] Incredible as Dr. Cowlishaw's story may appear, it is based on fact vouched for by a Blue Book.

dozens of 'em, often in threes and fours. Mostly small, of course, but plenty big. I went back to my stuff and sat down to think about it.

"Of course, it was easy to see what had happened. That was in my job. Some time or other there had been a river there—a split from the Orange—and down that river had gone, for Lord knows how many thousands of years, part of the silt of the main stream. In the silt went the diamonds. By-and-by the silt choked up the offshoot, gradually the under layers got covered up with sand and rubble, until one fine day no water went that way any more. I suppose you've seen that some one else found my ditch since. It's government property now, nicely fenced in with barbed wire and machine-guns. But I didn't think that was going to happen to it when I sat in it, wondering just what I was going to do about it.

"Well, after thinking in hundreds of millions for a bit, I began to think of beer and soap again, so I picked up my knapsack and started off for the fort. If I had known then what I knew a couple of hours later, I'd have filled my pockets and my breeches with the darned things. But I reckoned I had about a million in my knapsack, and I thought that would last me until I got back there with a fleet of lorries.

"I fetched up at the fort all right, and they gave me beer and soap. But they weren't a bit pleased to see me, because I happened to be a British subject, and England and Germany happened to have been at war then for about six weeks. They put me across the river kindly but firmly. When I got to Port Nolloth I found my bosses behind barbed wire and my job gone. There didn't seem any likelihood of my seeing my ditch for some little time, and, anyhow, it seemed to me

wiser to get well away from it before I started to try and realise some of my loot. I went down to Cape Town, shut up my knapsack in a steel case in a bank, and started in to find out about selling diamonds.

"It didn't take me a great time to discover that I wasn't going to sell any in a hurry. To begin with, the only thing that interested the right sort of man just then was the war. There were plenty of the other sort—willing to buy—at their own price and in their own way. I had one or two interviews with gentlemen with long noses, who did business in the open air with their eyes anywhere but where you could see them. They took it for granted that the stones I showed them were stolen—though they were puzzled as to where they had come from. These beggars, I believe, can tell at a glance what mine a stone has come out of. What they offered me was, of course, a ludicrous price. In the end I struck a nasty snag in a sort of boozing-ken down near the docks. Two beggars threatened to hand me over to the police, and went for me with some of their pals when I got annoyed about it. Fortunately, I had only one stone on me at the time—a small one. They got that, and I got a broken head. That cooled my ardor a good deal, and, anyhow, by that time I wanted to get into uniform. So I packed the job in for the time being, joined up, and went off after a bit to German East. I didn't get back to the Cape until 1920. And then I was offered a job with De Beers in Kimberley. A chap I came across during the war had a pull and did the needful for me. It was a good job—the first good one I'd ever had, and I settled down to it. Sometimes I used to think about that haversack down in Cape Town. But gradually I came to think of it as something—well, unreal, or, rather, valueless. I got to know all about the Dia-

mond Laws. They don't leave much scope for people who want to sell diamonds and don't want to say where they got them. For I still had it at the back of my head that some time I'd go back to Namaqualand with a mining concession, and scrape that ravine clean. And so I never told a living soul a word about it until one night Brazil made me drunk and got it out of me.

"You didn't know Brazil at all, did you?—Tanquered I mean. You saw the worst of him that night—and very little of it. But he could be the most charming and attractive beggar in the world. To look at him, you'd say he was as straight as a die. There was something about him that made you like him at once—a sort of cool, good-natured confidence in himself. As you saw, he was an exceedingly good-looking chap. With the help of a cigarette he'd convince you that black was white. I was introduced to him by a friend one night, in the bar of the Palace. He had a diamond license then, I believe. But at that time he was running two hotels, half a newspaper, and a big garage. I took a fancy to him—as I've told you, I'm impressionable—about people. That's the German in me, I expect. I took to dropping in of evenings fairly regularly at the Palace—cards and billiards and talk and whisky. I got into the habit of drinking a good deal too much whisky—and very little made me talk too much.

"That sort of thing went on for a year or so, and by that time—this was in 1924, when I'd been nearly four years at Kimberley—I was pretty intimate with Brazil, went round to race-meetings with him, went up to Rhodesia for some shooting with a party he got up, and so forth. I'll say this for him: I found him straight as a die, personally—until I didn't. And another thing about him—he lived clean and talked

clean. He was a first-class heavy-weight, a first-class shot, and *the* best story-teller I ever met.

"He very seldom talked about himself, and no one that I knew in Kimberley knew anything worth talking of about his previous history, except that he'd done well in the war, flying. It was that that, in the end, set me talking round my knapsack, when we were alone of nights in his private rooms at the Palace.

"By that time, you see, some one else had found diamonds in Namaqualand—not in my ditch yet, a bit further east and north. Not a big find, but enough to set the government thinking. They had inclosed all the area north of the Orange, practically down to the sea, and had shut down on all applications for land and mining concessions there. The fact was, as I heard afterwards, that they were afraid there were enough diamonds round about there to knock the bottom out of the market unless the output was kept down very carefully. I'd made inquiries from time to time—I was in the way of getting information about what was going on there—and I began to see that my visions of getting back with that fleet of lorries were not going to work out. But Brazil's service in the Flying Corps started me on another idea. Instead of the lorries, why not a few trips in a 'plane, from some handy jumping-off place? The actual raking-in of the stones would be such a simple business, once one got there, that half a dozen trips even, with two of us, would collar enough to make both of us millionaires. I'd heard that, as a matter of fact, they were sending down the diamonds they were taking out to Port Nolloth by 'plane. Of course that made it easy. Guard stations would have to be widely spaced out over such a big area. They'd probably be still out of direct touch with any central headquarters. A 'plane flying

over would seem one of the 'planes on the official job. Times could be watched to fit. Or, if the trips were made at night, as they could easily, once a landing-place had been located, there would be nothing to stop it—at all events until half a dozen trips or so had been made.

"I thought over this for a long time, and then one night, when I'd had enough whisky to make everything seem easy, I told Brazil all about the ravine and my idea for getting back to it. I showed him a couple of good-sized stones I'd carried round with me ever since I'd left the Cape. That was the first time that I discovered that he was not on the straight. He told me then that his hotels and the rest of it were merely cover, and that his real business was diamonds. I. D. B., of course. He was a bit drunk, too, that night, and, I expect, said more than he meant to. At any rate, when I thought it over next day, I chilled down on my great idea—and on him. I didn't want to be mixed up in anything shady—I had a good job; I was thinking of getting married, and—to make a long story short—I kept clear of him for a month or so. For that matter, he kept clear of me. Probably he was uncomfortable about having given himself away.

"Then things went wrong with me. I had a row with the chap over me, over some silly thing or another, and turned down my job. That put the tin hat on my marrying—as a matter of fact, the girl married some one else a few months afterwards. I had saved nothing, and I was really tight for money after a few weeks. I took to dropping into the Palace again at night, and Brazil made things easy for me, gave me a room, and told me not to worry about the bill at the end of the month. In the end he persuaded me to go down to Cape Town and bring back the stones I had in the bank there. When I got back to Kimberley I heard

that he had sold the two hotels he was running. That ought to have warned me. But it didn't.

"The night I got back, I had supper with him at Baratti's, and then we went back to my room at the Palace. He told me that he had arranged about my account there, and that things would go on just as before about it. We got up a couple of bottles of whisky, and I opened the steel case and took out my old knapsack. I can see his face now—if I close my eyes—when I poured the stones out onto my bed. It was the last time I was to see it for some time. While I was bending over the bed he knocked me out. When I woke up I was tied to my bed, with a towel stuffed into my mouth—the stones and the knapsack were gone—and so was he. I never saw him again until last Tuesday night. It took me just four years to find him.

"I suppose it seems to you that it would have been a perfectly simple thing to have gone to the police, told them the facts, and started them off on Brazil's tracks. So it would. I very nearly did it. But when I thought it over, I saw that I should merely be wasting my time. I hadn't a scrap of evidence to prove my story—and Brazil wasn't likely to help me to prove it. I should merely get into the papers as a rogue or a fool—probably both. Besides, I thought then that I wanted to settle up with Brazil myself, in my own way. I got as far as buying a revolver and a box of ammunition, and then I got sick of the whole thing. I went along to my old chief, told him I was on the rocks, and asked him to do something for me. He got me back my job and advised me to cut out whisky. I've never touched a drop of it since.

"I stayed on in Kimberley until the October of 1927. Then a younger brother of mine died—I hadn't seen him or heard anything of him for years. But I found out then that he'd

made a pretty big lot of money out of a silk-substitute he had put on the market, and that he had never married. He died suddenly, without making a will, and some of his money came to me—about eight thousand a year it meant for me. I came home, settled up things, did a bit of traveling on the Continent, got dead sick of doing nothing, and took on a job as assistant-curator at the Royal College,—just to have a job.

"And then, one day about three months ago, in Hatton Garden I saw Brazil—just caught a glimpse of him as he drove away in a car from another man to whom he had been speaking. I'd got out of the way of thinking about him, except now and then—but seeing him again brought back some of the old feeling—sharp, for the moment. If he hadn't got away then, I think I should have followed him and given him in charge to the first policeman, and had the whole thing out. Anyhow, though there didn't seem much chance of anything coming of it, I thought I'd find out something about the fellow he had been talking to. It struck me as significant that I had seen him there in that particular place; that looked as if he was still dealing in diamonds—possibly mine. I ought to say that the man he had spoken to was that fellow Burgin. I suppose you had guessed that.

"I followed him round for nearly four hours—and for most of the time I didn't see him, because he was in some pub or other, and I didn't want to run the risk of being spotted by following him in. However, at two o'clock, when the pubs shut—I found out afterwards that he met his pals in these places—he got on a 'bus, and I had to risk it. I followed him to a lodging-house in Gower Street, at the Euston Road end. When he didn't come out, after an hour or so, I chanced it, and concluded he was staying there. Next day I got there early with my car, and followed him when he came out. He

did the same thing as the day before—dodged backwards and forwards between bars, and went home again. After a week I could tell exactly where to find him any time between eleven and two. That went on for some weeks, and then he disappeared for two days. When I picked him up again, he had changed his lodgings to a place off Tottenham Court Road. As I never saw him talking to anyone, and as he never seemed to go anywhere else except to the same little set of bars, I got tired of hanging about during the day, especially as the curator had begun to grouse about my taking so many mornings off. So I tried keeping an eye on his lodgings in the evening. And that proved a little more interesting, though it didn't bring me any nearer to Brazil.

"My belief is that Burgin's occupation after dark is burgling jewelers' shops in the suburbs. Mind you, I never saw him at this amusement, actually. But what I did see was this. A very fast little two-seater used to come down Tottenham Court Road about ten o'clock at night, and pick him up outside Oetzmann's. Then it would make for one of the suburbs —usually Surrey way. Burgin would get out and stroll about; the car would go along the street a bit and pull up. They always selected a main street with good shops for this performance, I noticed; and always got there about the same time—about a quarter past eleven, when the streets were pretty quiet, but not quite deserted yet. After three or four trips I noticed that the shop the car stopped outside was always a jeweler's shop, and a big one. The car would wait until Burgin came along, sauntering. Then he'd get into the car, and he and the driver would stay there for a few minutes, talking and looking about them, up and down the street. I watched them doing this—always exactly the same thing in exactly the same way—five nights in succession in

Lewisham. The sixth night I didn't go. But I saw in the papers next day that that jeweler's shop had been raided and a lot of stuff got away with.

"Croydon, Surbiton, Wimbledon, Richmond, Guildford, Dorking—I followed them to these places other nights. I've no doubt they were on the same game there, watching to see what the chances were for a smash and a get-away.

"Well, at first it was rather amusing—but I got fed up with it and very nearly dropped Burgin altogether. But last week I put the chap who looks after my car for me on to the job. And the very first day he took it on he had a bit of luck. He followed Burgin into a public house in the Euston Road, and heard him telling a man he met there that he was going down to Chanton Mendip on the following Tuesday to see his friend Louie Tanquered.

"That was the Friday of last week. Last Saturday I took the day off and went down to Hatchbridge and stayed the night there. I made inquiries about Tanquered—as a matter of fact, they knew all about him at the hotel I stayed at—and from the description they gave of his appearance, it seemed to me very likely that Mr. Tanquered of Danmore Lodge was my old friend Brazil. I hired a car on Sunday and drove up to Chanton Mendip and saw his house, but didn't succeed in seeing him, though I hung about for a while on the off-chance. I had to get back to London that night to make some preparations for my class on Monday, and the only decent train was early in the afternoon. But on Tuesday I got to Paddington before eight o'clock, and watched the possible trains until Burgin turned up for the 11:30. I traveled down in the compartment next his, to Bristol, and then on to Blagdon, where he got out and went off in a car he'd evidently arranged should meet him. I knew where he was

making for, so I was in no hurry, as I thought it certain he intended to stay the night at Mr. Tanquered's place. So I walked up, deciding that I'd stay the night at the Bower of Bliss and catch Brazil—if it was he—early next morning at his house. If you ask me what I intended to say to him, or what I hoped to get out of him, I honestly don't think I could give you a definite answer. My idea, really, was, I think, that he'd get the wind up when he found that I'd run him to earth, and perhaps hand over some of the diamonds, if he still had them, to patch things up. I give you my word that I did not contemplate anything in the way of physical violence. All that had passed with me long ago. I'm too soft to bear a grudge for very long—though I *am* half Scots.

"I was a bit taken aback by finding Burgin staying at the inn, though I never suspected for a moment that he knew I'd been watching him for weeks—months back. However, in case he should by any chance have spotted me, I faked up a yarn about having a nephew at the Sanatorium, to explain my coming there. And then, of course, Brazil's coming down to the inn altered my plans. The moment I heard his voice in the passage, speaking to you, when he asked you where his wife was, I knew it was Brazil.

"He never turned a hair when I spoke to him in the sitting-room and asked him if he remembered me—just looked at me as cool as a cucumber—he was far cooler than I was, as far as that goes—and said, 'Hullo, Cowlishaw! My dear old chap, what lovely whiskers you've got! How are you?' Then he turned round to Burgin and said, 'Allow me to introduce you to my friend Cowlishaw,' and Burgin grinned and said, 'I believe Dr. Cowlishaw and I know one another quite well by sight.' They were both quite pleasant and

quite at their ease. I think we talked about the Mendip scenery and the storm after that. Then Brazil settled down in a chair with his bottle of brandy and left me to Burgin. I really can't tell you what he and I talked about. But at any rate, one thing we did *not* talk about—and that was diamonds. I saw that Brazil meant to carry on with his second bottle and that Burgin was determined to sit me out. So, about half-past eleven, I went to bed."

"Burgin's room was next yours, at the end of the cross passage. Did you hear him come up to bed?"

"No. I fell asleep at once. I always do. But I did hear him in his room—about a quarter to one. I woke up then for a few minutes, and I heard him, I believe, turning in bed. I fell asleep again almost at once—until you awoke me. And that's all *I* know about the business. But, of course, I quite see that other people, when they've heard what you've heard, may not believe that it *is* all."

"Quite."

"Naturally, I'm not asking for trouble. On the other hand, as a law-abiding citizen, well—I suppose I ought to tell the police what I know about Burgin, at any rate."

"Not a lot, is it, in point of fact?"

"Well, it *is* merely surmise, I suppose, most of it. Still, of course, it points to the fact that Burgin is a shady customer and that he's interested in jewelry. Whoever searched Brazil, did him in first. That's pretty certain, isn't it?"

"Fairly probable."

"Well, whoever it was must have known Brazil well enough to know that he wore that belt—and to know what he carried round in it. Chrisson could hardly have known that."

"If Chrisson or anyone else had searched his pockets, on

general principles, he might have felt the belt through the clothes, and found out about it that way. But I agree. I don't believe for a moment that Chrisson did him in. But I don't think Burgin did."

Cowlishaw took off his glasses to stare in surprise.

"Then who did?"

But Gore had no answer for that question save a shrug as he rose to take his leave.

"At any rate, Dr. Cowlishaw, I think the best thing for you to do is to sit quite tight, for the moment. Let's wait until they get Burgin, shall we?"

With visible relief, Cowlishaw nodded.

"They're safe to nab him," he assured himself, if not his visitor, as he escorted him to the lift. He gave Gore a list of the addresses connected with Burgin, as well as his own private address, to which he proposed to return next day.

"A long story," he said as he held out his hand. "I hope it's ended, for me. I'm tired of it."

CHAPTER XVI

Dr. Waudby, alighting from his car outside his surgery in Stoneford about lunch-time next day, recognized with some surprise the occupant of a Bentley drawn up before his garden gate.

"Good morning, Doctor. My name's Gore. We met the other night."

"Yes, yes. Thought I knew your face. Quite a business up at the Bower of Bliss, hadn't you? Sorry for old Tanquered. Nasty end. I suppose you knew him? Decent fellow. Anything I can do for you?"

Gore smiled winningly.

"Well, yes, if you will. I think you mentioned that night, just as you were going away from the inn, that you had a couple of dogs to put asleep somewhere."

"Yes. Two Cairns of Lady Humbolt's. As a matter of fact, I didn't, though. Her keeper had to shoot the poor little beggars. When I got to the house, I found that I'd come along without the needful. The old dame was frightfully stuffy about it. Don't expect she'll ever employ me again. Frightfully stupid of me. I could have sworn I put the bottle into my case before I started out that night. However—I didn't."

"You're quite sure you didn't?"

The doctor's smile faded at the gravity of the question.

"Well, as you ask, I'm not. I believe that I remember distinctly picking the dash thing up off my surgery table. My dispenser swears she left it there for me, at any rate.

But, there it is. It wasn't in my case when I got to Lady Humbolt's. Why do you ask?"

That question Gore put by pleasantly for the moment.

"When you went upstairs to Mr. Boyne's room, you took your case with you?"

"Yes."

"Into the room?"

"Yes."

"Did you take anything out of it while you were in the room."

"Yes. My stethoscope and a clinical thermometer and some iodine."

"You used those, I suppose, while you were examining Mr. Boyne—and put them back into your case when you had finished?"

"Naturally. But why——?"

"Just a moment, Doctor. Where was the case while you were busy with Mr. Boyne?"

"On a chair near the door of the room."

"Might I see the case, if you have it in your car?"

Waudby nodded, mystified, and exhibited the case—the usual country practitioner's vade mecum opening in the middle so that both halves lay flat on the cushion of the car, displaying the neatly arranged and labeled contents.

"Thanks," Gore said, when he had inspected it. "I notice that the labels of your bottles are written with beautiful distinctness. By the way, who else was in the room while you were examining Boyne?"

"Who else? Mrs. Tanquered—and Miss Higgins. And Miss Higgins got in two chaps—I don't know their names—to give me a hand to lift Boyne while we got another mattress under him."

He described these assistants. Clearly Burgin and the younger Stanton—both, no doubt, on the lookout for a glimpse of the charming companion, had been passing along the corridor and had only been too eager to lend a hand in making the patient more comfortable. Both had remained some moments in the room afterwards, but Waudby could not recall whether either had stood in the neighborhood of the chair on which the case had rested. Naturally, both had passed it as they had left the room; but he could not remember that he had seen them leave it, his attention having been concentrated on Boyne.

"But why," he asked again, "this interest in my bottle of chloroform?"

"Because you *did* pack it in your case."

"Then what became of it?"

"Some one who was in the room while the case was open pinched it."

"Pinched it? What on earth for?"

When he had heard the story of Mr. James Stanton's strange indisposition once, Waudby insisted on sharing an excellent steak-and-kidney pie and an apple dumpling with his visitor, while he heard it a second time. Lunch finished, he cross-examined the very capable young woman who manufactured his pills for him. She, at all events, was absolutely certain that she had filled a four-ounce bottle with chloroform on Tuesday evening and left it on the surgery table, together with three telephone messages which had come in during the doctor's absence. Waudby had certainly seen the telephone messages, since he had attended to all three that evening on his rounds. His conviction that he had placed the bottle in his case grew to unwilling certainty.

"One thing I'll swear," he said as Gore started up Dr.

Melhuish's Bentley. "Chrisson didn't come into Boyne's room while I was there. *He* can't have pinched the bottle."

"Hope you'll tell Inspector Shadgold that," Gore smiled. "I expect he'll come along and see you pretty soon."

His foot was on the clutch and his hand on the gear-lever, but Waudby still leaned over a door of the car thoughtfully. He was a hard-headed young man from Ulster, obviously not addicted to emotional disturbance; but something was disturbing him just now.

"Mind you," he said at length, "marks on the skin—abrasions—scratches—these are all rather vague descriptions. Unless I'd seen these marks you speak of, myself, I wouldn't undertake to form any opinion about them. But it's a funny thing that they should have been just where you and Melhuish saw them—and on Tanquered. I don't know if you're aware that about two years ago a nephew of his—by marriage—got killed in a rather curious way up at Danmore Lodge. A load of gravel fell on him—cart tilted when he was hanging out of the back of it, and the gravel smothered him. He was quite a kid. Old Sharp wasn't to be found that morning, so they got me up. But of course there was nothing to do. The kid had been dead for nearly three hours when I saw him. However, what I was going to say is this. Of course there were scratches all over the poor youngster's face and neck. But I remember that at the time I was a bit puzzled by some of the marks—especially under the chin and under the nose. I was told that when they had found him, a bit of rope which had been hanging from the back of the cart had been tightly twisted round his wrists. And I saw that his wrists had been marked by the rope pretty badly. I'm not a very suspicious sort of chap—but of course things come into one's mind. I remember now quite distinctly thinking,

while I was talking to Tanquered about it that morning, that if it was an accident that the kid had been killed, it was a damn lucky one for Tanquered, because it meant fifty or sixty thou a year for him. I don't mean to say that I thought that very seriously. Just the thought came into my head and went out again. But it's rather odd that, if Melhuish is right, something like what I suspected then had happened to his nephew should have happened to him."

"Did you make any notes, at the time?" Gore asked, quickly.

"Of what I saw, yes. Not of what I thought. Care to see them?"

They went back to the surgery and read the brief but careful memoranda of Waudby's observations three hours after the child's death. Waudby said the obvious thing.

"Looks as if they had a specialist up there at Chanton Mendip, doesn't it? However, as I say, scratches and scrapes may happen any old how. What I've told you just now is entirely unprofessional—and quite between ourselves, I trust. As regards the chloroform—I suppose the inspector has got to hear about that."

"I'm afraid so," Gore agreed, and went on to Bridgwater, where he found Inspector Shadgold watching philosophically the congested traffic of its narrow main street. The inspector had no further news of Burgin, but expected to receive that evening from London photographs of a couple of men whom the Yard considered possible fits for the description forwarded to it. He listened with guarded interest to the story of Dr. Waudby's missing bottle and of the elder Mr. Stanton's unpleasant experiences during the night, but was plainly not greatly impressed by it.

"Well, you see, Colonel, the old chap had taken more

whisky than he could carry comfortably. He admits that himself, you say. Well, he was sick. He *would* be. As for the smell you noticed in the room—you say it was slight. But all the rooms in the place smelled a bit—musty and shut up—you know. Hard, now, to tell one slight musty smell from another, isn't it?"

"The window of the room was open and the wind was coming right in through it." Mr. Stanton told me he had shut it last thing, on account of the wind. If he did—who had opened it? And why?"

"Well, what's your suggestion, Colonel—to come down to brass tacks? You don't suggest that Mr. Tanquered was doped, do you? And if *he* wasn't, I don't see that it matters a lot what happened to Mr. Stanton. However, I'll go up and see the old gentleman tomorrow and bring these photos along to show him. You ought to see them, too, of course. Where can I meet you in Linwood? Why not let us go and see old Stanton together?"

If the inspector's visit to Linwood next day provided him with a disappointment (Mr. Stanton and Gore both agreed at once that the photographs exhibited to them bore no faintest resemblance to Burgin), it gave him the satisfaction of feeling quite certain of his wisdom in regarding Dr. Waudby's missing bottle as of no importance. Mr. Stanton himself was absolutely convinced that his indisposition had been solely due to imprudent and unaccustomed indulgence in Glenburnie. He pointed out that it was absurd to suppose that anyone could have gone into his room—its floor boards had been bare, like those of all the rooms on the upper floor of the inn—and chloroformed him without making some noise which would have awakened him. Colonel Gore was mistaken as to what he had said about the window; he had thought of

closing it, on account of the wind, but had forgotten to do so. Why should anyone go into his room and chloroform him? The worthy gentleman was a little irritable that morning and fidgeted incessantly about his office, clearly in the hope of inducing his visitors to cut short their stay. To his unconcealed relief, it lasted but ten minutes.

"Red herring, Colonel," grinned the Inspector, as he and Gore parted. "Tasty—but nothing to it."

"Here's one with a bit more meat on it for you," smiled Gore. "Ask your pals in the Yard if they've ever heard of a bloke called Ray Bernard. Also called the Slinger. Suggest that if they drop in at the Welsh Rabbit in the Euston Road they may hear something that will interest them—if they go about it tactfully. . . . No, I'm not going to tell you what it is. That would deprive you of the pleasure of finding out for yourself."

Whatever Inspector Shadgold's private opinion of red herrings, he was not the man to leave even the least promising of scents uninvestigated. Upon this magnanimity of soul he had reason to congratulate himself. Before he slept that night he had learned—as one of Messrs. Gore & Tolley's young men had learned just twenty-four hours before—that "Burgin" was one of the numerous *noms de guerre* of an individual known most authoritatively as Ray Bernard—under which name he had had at one time some reputation as a middleweight. His present means of livelihood and associations were of a kind which had provided for a considerable while back various plain-clothes men with matter for speculation, though so far without unfortunate results for him. Though his pal "Georgie," under pressure, had "opened his face," and though he and some half dozen other intimates of Bernard's had been exhaustively "put through it," none of

them had been able to give any clue to their missing friend's present whereabouts. The Yard was naturally anxious to discover just how Messrs. Gore & Tolley's young man had happened to drop into the Welsh Rabbit to look for a friend of "Georgie's" with a battered ear, and the inspector got on the telephone to Linwood straightaway. But Gore attributed his young man's inspiration entirely to a partiality for red herrings.

For Simon Wyckham Melhuish's special benefit, his parents had resigned themselves to wireless. He listened attentively to the details of the portrait of Mr. Ray Bernard, otherwise known as "Slinger," "Captain Roden," and "Nippy," which it broadcasted that night.

"I saw a man like that today," he declared, solemnly, "when I was out with nurse. He was waiting for a 'bus outside Sayles & Boston's garage. Half of his one ear wasn't there."

Doubtless some hundreds of people scattered over England went to bed that night with a similar conviction. Ray Bernard, however, remained coy. At the end of a fortnight he was still unfound.

But by that time the Yard had discovered some other details of interest concerning him. At various times within the past two years he had offered for sale to different Hatton Garden dealers uncut diamonds, some of very considerable value. In some cases sales had resulted; in others his refusal to disclose the name of the principal for whom he was acting had prevented any business being done. Most of the diamonds sold were quickly traced to their present owners; all were "green" stones, resembling those found on Tanquered, and were declared by the experts who examined them to have come almost certainly from Gt. Namaqualand. It seemed that "Burgin's" intimacy with Tanquered was ex-

plained and that Tanquered had employed him as his intermediary in the piecemeal sale of his mysterious treasure.

His abrupt flight from the lonely Mendip inn in the small hours of the morning invested itself with a sharper suspicion. Inspector Shadgold, unshaken in his own theory, thought it just as well to pay Mrs. Tanquered and Mr. James Stanton another visit. The case still remained in his hands; he was quite satisfied with it and them, and did not propose to allow himself to be flurried by hints that it might be taken out of them. None the less, upon the afternoon preceding his visit to Linwood, he drove up from Bridgwater to Chanton Mendip and called at Danmore Lodge. He found it vacant, and was informed by the postmistress at Shippen that Mrs. Tanquered was at the moment staying with her mother at Wraxton Court, whither letters were to be forwarded until further notice.

"Yes. They went off four days ago in a hurry. Paid off all the servants. Mrs. Tanquered is going to live in Linwood, in her flat by what I hear. Danmore Lodge is to be sold—if anyone can be got to buy it."

As the inspector was smoking a pipe after his midday dinner next day, preparatory to his trip up to Westmouth, Colonel Gore was ushered into his little office.

"Afternoon, Inspector. I wonder if you'd do me a small favor. I think you told me the Shippen man—Bunter—took some statements at the time of young Greston's death. Would it be possible to see them? The chief constable told me he thought you had them."

The inspector saw no reason why he should refuse this request. As a matter of fact, he had reread carefully on the preceding night the copies filed at Bridgwater, and they were

in the battered desk at which he sat. He took them out and handed them to his visitor.

"Afraid you won't find anything to help Chrisson much, Colonel. By the way, I hear you're paying his legal expenses. Very generous of you. But I'm afraid you're throwing good money away. Well, I must be off. Running up to have another chat with old Stanton and see if I can squeeze anything at all about Burgin out of him. Don't expect for a moment I shall. However, a run round in Westmouth won't do me any harm."

"We may meet again, then, this afternoon," smiled Gore, already settling to the study of the little wad of typewritten sheets before him. "If you're at Stanton's place round half-past five, I've got some information which may interest you. But I shan't get there before that, probably."

The inspector was disposed to linger. But it was after two o'clock, and he proposed to take in Wraxton Court on his way.

"Righto, Colonel. You can leave those things in the desk when you've finished with them. See you later, then, perhaps."

As Shadgold had predicted, the hour and a half which Gore devoted to the perusal of the statements elicited from them nothing in the least helpful to the clearing of Chrisson. The fact emerged beyond doubt that the younger Chrisson had been at all events within a few yards of the spot at which the child had been found dead at or about the time at which it was supposed to have died. So far as that fact went to show anything, it went to show that there had been at least some good grounds for the feeling shown against the Chrissons at the time.

Gore jotted down, however, the following summary:

1. The child, Philip Greston, aged 4. Only child of Hon. Mrs. Greston's only son, who died in 1924. Mother alive. Child frequently stayed at Danmore Lodge.
2. Last seen alive, according to his statement, by Simon Chrisson, about half-past ten on morning of November 25, 1926. Found dead under cartload of gravel which had tilted out of the cart, at 1:25. Dr. Waudby certified that he had then been dead approximately three hours.
3. Mary Routley, nursemaid, saw him a little after 10 A.M. He was then playing with the dogs on the drive before the house. Routley had a lot of washing to do that morning. It was not until nearly half-past twelve that it occurred to her to go in search of her charge. She failed to find him, and gave the alarm which resulted after nearly an hour's search in the discovery of the child's dead body under the gravel, in a corner of the vegetable garden, behind the stable-yard.
4. The only persons known actually to have entered the yard between ten o'clock and half-past twelve were the child and Simon Chrisson.

   Chrisson had some acquaintance with the two grooms employed at Danmore Lodge, and, having no regular occupation of his own, used occasionally to go up there to chat with them. Both grooms were away that morning. "Tanquered" did not hunt that day, but the grooms had been ordered to take out a couple of horses and follow hounds, which met that day at Shippen, until dinner-time, when they were to return. They did not return until after one o'clock.

   The chauffeur was also away that day; he had driven Mrs. Tanquered up to Wraxton Court.

   Barty Crump, driver of baker's van from Shippen, called at the house about a quarter to eleven, as nearly as he could fix the time. Passing the entrance to the yard, he looked in

and saw Simon Chrisson "mooching about like." On his way down the drive again, he looked into the yard, but saw no one there. The place where he stated he saw Chrisson was at the far end of a row of loose boxes, close to the corner where the cartload of gravel had been left standing.

5. Simon Chrisson's own statement was that he had not been in the yard five minutes. He had seen the child Philip Greston playing near the load of gravel, but had neither spoken to it nor had anything to do with it. He had come up to get some embrocation for a strained elbow from one of the grooms. As there was no one about, he had gone into the harness-room, poured some embrocation into a small bottle he found there, and gone away. He had then visited some snares up at the Grass Camp, and had reached the Bower of Bliss a good hour before dinner-time, which was about noon. Luke Chrisson, his brother, corroborated the last statement.
6. Mrs. Tanquered and the younger Mrs. Greston—the child's mother—both of whom had spent the day at Wraxton Court, did not return until summoned by telephone after the discovery of the child's body.
7. "Tanquered" stated that he had had a fall a couple of days previously and strained some leg muscles. As he had been unable to hunt that morning, after breakfast he had strolled across country towards Shippen, hoping to see hounds find. On the way back his leg had given him trouble and he had not reached the house until half-past eleven. He found a visitor, a Mr. Russell, waiting for him, and was engaged with him until nearly twelve. They had sat in the back sitting-room, the windows of which looked out into the yard; but as they had sat by the fire, their backs had been towards the windows. They had heard no cry or other sound from the yard.
8. Phyllis Hall, parlor-maid (this was the sprightly damsel whom I interviewed on the day of the inquest) stated that,

happening to look out of an upper window overlooking the yard, about half-past ten, she had seen Simon Chrisson standing at the door of the harness-room, doing something with two bottles. She had been busy all the morning after that polishing the silver.

9. Rose Courtney, housemaid, had turned out "Tanquered's" bedroom that morning and had had no time, she stated, to think of anything else.
10. Miss Higgins, upon whom the principal part of the housekeeping devolved, had divided her morning between her weekly accounts and the supervision of the maid's work.
11. The actual scene of the tragedy was not in view from any window of the house, or from the drive. At the inner end of the row of loose boxes, a gate led into a large vegetable garden. The garden proper, for whose walks the load of gravel was intended, lay behind the house, inclosed by a high brick wall. The cart had been left, resting on its shafts, on a patch of waste ground at the edge of the vegetable garden, hidden from the house by this wall, from the drive by the row of loose boxes.
12. The cart, which belonged to Danmore Lodge, had stood there for over a week. A piece of rope had been left hanging from its tailboard. One of the grooms stated that he had taken the cart down to Danns Pitt for a load of gravel, and a mare which had lost a shoe had been taken down to the forge at Shippen, fastened to the cart. He had not subsequently removed the piece of rope.
13. The child had frequently been seen in the course of the preceding week swinging from the rope. It was usual for it to spend the entire morning playing about the place unwatched.
14. "Tanquered" stated that some weeks before Simon Chrisson had taken his car from before the Bower of Bliss inn, where he had left it while shooting in the fields near, had driven it along the Shippen Road and ditched it, damaging it. He

had given Chrisson "a bit of a hiding" instead of summonsing him.

15. The rope was found twisted tightly round both wrists of the boy, the end looped through on each wrist, so that it would have been impossible for him to use his hands to make any effort to free himself.
16. The finding at the inquest was "Died by misadventure."

There was, of course, the fact—which Gore had not known before, that Tanquered had been that morning within a stone's-throw of the spot at which his nephew had died; but —according to his statement—during the half-hour from 11:30 to 12, and in the company of his visitor, Mr. Russell. If he had found Mr. Russell waiting for him, presumably in the room in which they had sat together afterwards, it would have been interesting to know how long Mr. Russell had waited, and whether he had seen anyone in the yard while he waited. On his way back to Linwood, Gore turned aside at Stoneford and ran up to Shippen, on the chance that Bunter or some one else might be able to help him to find some of the servants employed at Danmore Lodge at the time. Bunter was out on patrol, but the postmistress, who apparently knew the history of every man, woman, and child for five miles around, directed him to a small farm about a mile south of the village, where he found the ex-housemaid, Rose Courtney. This young woman had left employment at Danmore Lodge only five days before, when the house had been closed up, and was for the moment staying with her parents. She was an intelligent, straightforward girl, and remembered the morning of the child's death well.

She had been kept busy all that morning at her "turning out" of Mrs. Tanquered's bedroom, which Miss Higgins had expressly ordered must be completed by her mistress's return

in the afternoon. And so of what had gone on downstairs she could say nothing, except, as it happened, of the one detail concerning which Gore was in search of information.

She had begun work on the bedroom a little before ten. A little after ten—speaking now, about twenty past as well as she could recall, the parlor-maid, Phyllis, had run up to tell her that a "chap" had called to see Mr. Tanquered. Phyllis had always been a great one for any sort of "chap," it seemed, and had been favorably impressed by this one, who had seemed to her a "bit of a lad." His name, she had said, was Russell. Later on, about twelve, when the visitor had gone away, Rose Courtney had had the curiosity to look out of a window and see for herself what the "chap" was like. Apparently she had not thought a lot of him, and had gone back to her work.

But the important thing was a fact which she produced most unexpectedly and without questioning.

"That was the first time Burgin came to the house," she smiled. "Little Billy," we used to call him. We often used to wonder why he told Phyllis his name was Russell the first time he came. The second time he called himself Burgin, and laughed when Phyllis asked him if his name wasn't Russell. But it was always Burgin after that. I always had my suspicions of him. I never thought he was a gentleman, I'll say that. They haven't found him yet, I hear, sir."

"I wonder if Phyllis happened to mention where he was waiting when she came up to tell you about him," Gore asked.

"Yes. In the back sitting-room."

"And you think he came about twenty past ten? Not later?"

"No. Because I remember Miss Higgins hadn't come in to see how I was getting on yet. She was in and out that whole morning. No. It wasn't more than twenty past, I'm sure."

The girl could not say where the parlor-maid, Phyllis, now was, but believed she had gone home to her people, who lived near Gloucester. The nursemaid, Mary Routley, had been dismissed by Mrs. Tanquered immediately after the tragedy; nothing had been heard of her at Danmore Lodge afterwards.

But Rose Courtney's information had sufficiently rewarded Gore for the few miles added to his homeward journey. While the Buick purred back up the Bridgwater road, his thoughts were busy with the very curious coincidence which it had revealed.

If this girl's account was to be believed, Burgin had been in the back sitting-room at Danmore Lodge, alone, for over an hour from twenty past ten on, that morning. During that hour the boy, Philip, had died or been killed. Impossible to suppose that he had sat there alone and not looked out of the windows. Save Chrisson—perhaps not save Chrisson—had he, who was at the moment the last known person to have seen Tanquered alive, been also the last person to have seen his nephew alive? Chrisson's statement had been that when he saw the child, it had been swinging on the gate leading from the yard to the vegetable garden. That gate was in sight from the house; Gore remembered that, while he had waited in the "back sitting-room" on the day of the inquest, he had seen the chauffeur come in through it to talk to the two grooms who had just returned from exercising their horses.

He reduced his recollections of the room to precision. Its two windows looked across the yard. A glass-paneled door

at the back led out on to an iron balcony which ran round that side of the house, ending, near this door, in a small conservatory, from which a flight of steps descended to the yard.

The way to that sinister corner where the cartload of gravel had stood had been easy. Opportunity—time—if he had desired to commit an almost incredibly fiendish murder, both had been there for Burgin—if Rose Courtney was to be believed.

But—for what motive could such a crime have been committed—necessarily, if Burgin committed it then, committed on the spur of the moment—without previous plans? Revenge or insanity—common sense could hardly entertain any other explanation. Not a person to suspect of any kind of insanity, Burgin, with his shrewd eyes, determined, self-controlled mouth, and placid quietness of manner.

Revenge?

Along *that* line, a dubious light beckoned. Gore began to look forward with quickened interest to his visit to Mr. Stanton that afternoon.

For his assurance that the key to the mystery lay in James Stanton's keeping had grown stronger and stronger with every fresh scrap of information which he had gathered bearing on the affair. From the beginning it had been his conviction that the hands which had killed Tanquered had attempted to kill James Stanton. If Waudby was right, it seemed only too possible that they had killed young Philip Greston. What was the chain that had linked together the three crimes? What was it that James Stanton knew—and would not tell?

Inspector Shadgold performed the first stage of his journey to Linwood in a hired car, which delivered him duly at Wraxton Court. It was with extreme reluctance that Mrs. Greston

consented to further questioning of her daughter, whose state of health was causing her serious anxiety. The good-natured inspector, himself shocked by Mrs. Tanquered's haggard appearance and profound mental dejection, cut his interview as short as possible. He had not expected that she could tell him anything about Burgin which he did not already know; he was not disappointed when her twitching lips assured him again wearily that she knew nothing whatever about him or her husband's relations with him. He had considered from time to time, of course, the possibility that this strongly limbed if limply-nerved young woman had seized an opportunity to rid herself of a husband who had stood in the way of her infatuation for young Boyne. And he forced himself to consider it again as he sat facing her that afternoon, watching her fleeting glance and restless hands. But it was a formal exercise of the official mind merely. Symptoms of hysteria brought his visit to a hurried close. Miss Higgins, he learned, was also staying at Wraxton Court, but went up to Linwood every day to get the flat ready. He would find her, Mrs. Greston assured him, either there or at Messrs. Stantons' premises, where she spent some time every day supervising the repacking of the books and china stored there.

The December afternoon was closing in when the inspector, who had finished his journey by motor-bus, arrived outside Messrs. Stanton's establishment. A typist whom he interviewed in the lower office informed him that Mr. James Stanton was out and was not expected back until after five. A wait of over an hour, therefore, lay before the visitor. Some fifteen minutes of it had passed in contemplation of the typist's back view and of a row of ledgers, when it occurred to

the inspector to inquire if Miss Higgins had been there that day.

"Miss Higgins is here now, I believe," replied the typist. "She comes every afternoon. Did you wish to see her?"

The inspector did, and was led out of the cheerful warmth of the well-lighted office into that dim and cheerless hinterland of forgotten things which had impressed Simon Wyckham Melhuish so unfavorably. His guide, threading her nimble way through these silent arcades, rounded a corner and paused to make inquiry of some stalwart porters who were moving a grand piano into one of the storerooms.

"Miss Higgins, miss? Yes, she's working at her stuff. Mr. Henry's with her."

The inspector detected the smile which passed between the typist and the workmen. He, too, smiled indulgently as, at the remote end of yet another dark alley, he came in sight of two figures posed close together in the faint illumination of a draught-blown gas-jet. Very natural that young Mr. Stanton should find time to lend Miss Higgins a hand in sorting out the contents of the big cases which stood open around them.

His guide left him, and he advanced towards the light alone. Perhaps because he wore rubber-soled shoes, perhaps because young Mr. Stanton and his companion were absorbed in the volume over which their heads—very close together—were bent, he was close upon them before they became aware of him. The alacrity with which young Mr. Stanton placed himself at a less intimate distance from Miss Higgins amused the inspector as much as the fact that the remains of afternoon tea for two reposed on one of the packing-cases. But, though he was aware that Mr. Henry Stanton possessed a wife and a

family, his smile as he emerged into the lighted area remained paternally—if not fraternally—sympathetic.

It took Miss Higgins's lovely gray eyes a moment or so to recognize him, for this little excursion to Linwood had been made in mufti. But then her vivid, twinkling smile was flatteringly pleased, if a little surprised.

"Good afternoon, miss. Busy, I see. Good afternoon, Mr. Stanton. I wanted to have a word with your father. I hear he won't get back until after five, though. So I thought I'd just come along and see Miss Higgins for a moment, hearing she was on the premises."

Young Mr. Stanton had recovered from his first nervousness. He accepted the explanation and the hint with stiffness.

"Oh yes?" he remarked, coldly, and visibly made up his mind to stand his ground.

The inspector reflected that there was no special reason for privacy. It was just as likely—or as unlikely—that young Stanton could give him fresh information concerning "Burgin" as that Miss Higgins could. As it proved, neither had anything new to tell him. Unwilling to spoil sport, the excellent man left them and strayed back through the gloom to the comfort of the office, where he read the *Westmouth Times* until a quarter past five, when Colonel Gore strolled into the office. Learning that Mr. Stanton was expected now at any moment, Gore seated himself and smiled blandly upon his fellow-caller, until, a moment or two later, Mr. Stanton bustled in.

CHAPTER XVII

Mr. Stanton's bustle faded out at sight of the two figures which rose from the fireside to greet him. He was dead tired, he said—had been up to his eyes all day—had all the morning's letters still to attend to—had an appointment at the other side of the city in half an hour. However, he took them up to his own sanctum, offered them a cup of tea which they declined, and, in token of his imminent redeparture, gulped one down himself.

"Well, well, gentlemen," he demanded as he wolfed a biscuit, "what can I do for you?"

His impatience increased upon learning the object of the inspector's visit. He had already stated several times that he knew nothing whatever about the man "Burgin." Why his time and that of the police should be wasted by their coming to bother him with a perfectly useless and unnecessary repetition of questions which he had already answered, he could not conceive.

"Well, I'll put a new question to you, Mr. Stanton," resumed the inspector, unruffled. "Have you any reason to believe that any of the persons who were in the inn that night had any motive to injure you?"

"No. No reason whatever," snapped Mr. Stanton.

"Your son, now—I may take it that you and he are on good terms?"

Mr. Stanton snorted.

"Don't be an ass, sir. Of all the preposterous suggestions I ever heard in my life . . . Now, please take this as final. I have given you all the information I have to give you. If I

am subjected to any further annoyance over this wretched business, I shall be compelled to complain to a higher authority."

The inspector rose.

"You are at perfect liberty to do that, Mr. Stanton, of course. But you must understand that my duty has to be done."

"Well, go and do it, then," snapped Mr. Stanton, "and leave me to do mine." He turned his back on Shadgold, jingling his money angrily. "Anything I can do for you, Colonel? I'm in a great hurry."

"I think, Mr. Stanton, that Inspector Shadgold ought to know that 'Tanquered' was an assumed name. In point of fact, I dropped in this afternoon to have a word with you on the subject."

"Tsch! Nonsense!" blew Mr. Stanton. "What difference does it make if the man had a dozen names? If Inspector Shadgold hasn't found the man who murdered him, let him find him. *That's* what I have to tell him."

Shadgold had pricked up his ears.

"An assumed name?"

"Tanquered's real name," said Gore, "was Paul Brazil. He was born in 1888, in Westmouth. His mother's maiden name was Pauline Stanton. I think I'm right in saying, Mr. Stanton, that her father, Harold Stanton, and your father, William Stanton, were half-brothers?"

The fresh-colored little face bent over the manufacture of a second cup of tea raised itself quickly. Its jaws stopped munching biscuit for an appreciable instant. Its expression was for an appreciable instant disconcerted.

"Well, what about it?" demanded Mr. Stanton.

"That is to say, your father and the father of Pauline Brazil (she married a man named Herbert Brazil, employed by her father) were both the children of a lady called Theresa Moult

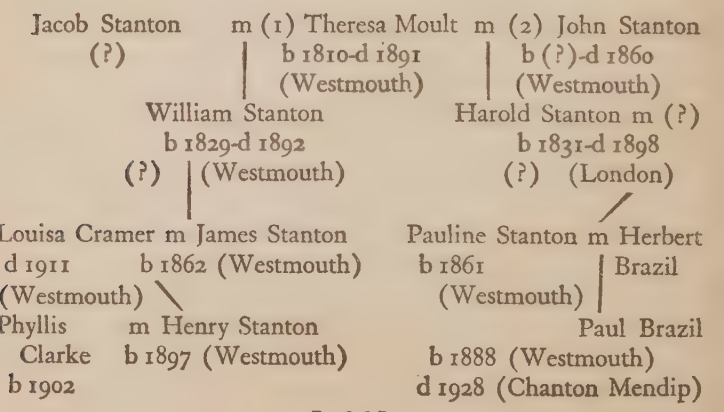
by different husbands. Both her husbands were Stantons. The inscription on your father's gravestone in the churchyard of St. Nicholas Church in Westmouth gives his father's name —that is to say, Theresa Moult's first husband's name—as Jacob Stanton. That on the gravestone of Harold Stanton, Pauline Brazil's father, in Highgate Cemetery, gives his parents' names as John and Theresa Stanton."

"You seem," remarked Mr. Stanton, after a moment of silence—"you seem to have been busy, Colonel. Very interesting, I'm sure. But I don't see what all this has to do with Inspector Shadgold."

Gore produced a little diagram from his notecase and passed it over to the inspector.

"That will make it clearer, perhaps, Inspector. I've put in any dates I've been able to get hold of. Perhaps you'll just get the different Stantons fixed in your head, and then we'll go on."

Shadgold, puzzled a little as to the purport of the miniature genealogical tree exhibited to him, studied it carefully for a moment or two.


Jacob Stanton (?)
m (1) Theresa Moult b 1810-d 1891 (Westmouth)
m (2) John Stanton b (?)-d 1860 (Westmouth)
William Stanton b 1829-d 1892 (?) (Westmouth)
Harold Stanton m (?) b 1831-d 1898 (?) (London)
Louisa Cramer d 1911 (Westmouth)
m James Stanton b 1862 (Westmouth)
Pauline Stanton b 1861 (Westmouth)
m Herbert Brazil
Phyllis Clarke b 1902
m Henry Stanton b 1897 (Westmouth)
Paul Brazil b 1888 (Westmouth) d 1928 (Chanton Mendip)

"Got that?" Gore went on as the inspector nodded. "I haven't been able to find out anything much about Theresa's two husbands. However, apparently—or presumably—they were relations of some sort."

He glanced invitingly toward Mr. Stanton, but that gentleman said, "Presume away, Colonel. Don't mind me," and finished his tea with marked indifference to his own family tree.

"Some time round 1835, as close as I can get, Theresa Moult's second husband, John Stanton, started out in the furniture business in Westmouth. The premises he took then still form part of the present city premises of Messrs. Stanton & Son, in City Meads St. He seems to have been an excellent business man and to have passed on his talent to his son Harold. Forty-four or five years later Messrs. Stanton were one of the largest and best-known firms in Westmouth. I mention this because Harold Stanton, in the year 1889, gave up all his interest in this valuable business to his stepbrother, William, who until that time had had nothing to do with it, and had been a clerk at a tannery in the city. Harold Stanton went up to London with his daughter Pauline, her husband Herbert Brazil, and their child Paul, who was then a year old, and William Stanton took over control of the business. William Stanton died in 1892, as you see. The business went to his son, Mr. James Stanton. It is still, as you are aware, a very large and valuable business—which, Mr. Stanton will allow me to say, has been expanded and developed extensively by him."

"Well——?" asked Mr. Stanton, unplacated, "what's all this long rigmarole coming to? I could have told you all this and saved you the trouble you seem to have gone to to poke it out."

"Precisely," agreed Gore suavely. "Now, why didn't you,

Mr. Stanton—if you wanted me to trace Pauline Brazil for you? However, suppose you tell us why Harold Stanton turned over this big and prosperous business to his half-brother William, the tanner's clerk, and went up to London, and took on a quite subordinate job with Messrs. Trebutt & Markham, a firm of furniture-dealers in quite a small way of business in Hampstead? You went into the business in 1889 with your father, when the transfer took place. I expect you can recall the circumstances under which it took place."

"It was a family arrangement," replied Mr. Stanton, after some moments of hesitation. "Harold Stanton received a consideration from my father for the surrender of his interest."

"Not a very large consideration, apparently. You gave me to understand that, before his death in 1891, his daughter Pauline applied twice to your father for financial assistance."

"Harold Stanton received a thousand pounds out of the business. He resigned his interest in it of his own free will. As I say, it was entirely a family matter—without the least bearing on Mr. Tanquered's death."

"On Paul Brazil's death," Gore amended. "Let us keep that fact in mind. There was no quarrel—no dispute—no pressure put on Harold Stanton to make this transfer—to a man employed as a clerk in a tannery—presumably at a small wage?"

"No."

"Will you tell us whether you have ever had any reason to believe that Paul Brazil knew of this incident?"

"None."

"Did he know that you and he were relatives?"

Mr. Stanton hesitated.

"Yes," he replied at length, with obvious reluctance. "But look here, Colonel Gore—look here, Inspector—I refuse absolutely to be dragged any further into this business—I——

Really, there must be a limit to this cross-examination as to my family affairs. God damn it! do you mean to suggest that because his grandfather agreed to a business arrangement forty years ago, this man tried to chloroform me? When did he try to do it, may I ask—before he was murdered himself, or after? Rot! Humbug! Now I have no more time to waste over such nonsense! You'll excuse me, gentlemen——"

The inspector gently interposed his largeness between the aggrieved little man and the door towards which he had moved quickly.

"Now, now, Mr. Stanton, this is not a matter of personal feelings, is it? I admit that, so far, what Colonel Gore has told us doesn't carry us much further——"

"It carries you nowhere," said Mr. Stanton, testily.

"However, it certainly does throw a new light on some points in the case. I understood you to say that Tanquered—or Brazil—knew that he was connected with you. How did you find that out—and when?"

"Three or four months ago."

"How did it arise? Did you introduce the subject—or he?"

"I had no idea whatever of anything of the kind. He called here one day when I had the matter of selling his wife's house and finding her a flat in hand. As he was leaving, he said to me: 'I expect you to find us a good purchaser, you know. Don't forget that you and I are relatives of a sort.' I was surprised, I needn't tell you. I said, 'How's that, Mr. Tanquered?' He laughed and turned it off as a joke. However, I thought it over afterwards. As a matter of fact, I had always wondered what became of my uncle Harold's daughter Pauline and her child. That was why, after thinking over what Mr. Tan—what Brazil had said, I decided to have the thing looked into. So I went to Colonel Gore."

"That was three months ago?"

"Four. In August."

"Did he ever make any other reference to the subject when you met him afterwards?"

"Never."

"Did you?"

"To him? No."

"Who entered into negotiations with you first, Mr. Stanton, about the sale of Mrs. Tanquered's house?" Gore asked. "She or her husband?"

"Mrs. Tanquered herself. He had nothing to do with the business until the sale was practically arranged."

"Had you had any previous dealings with Mrs. Tanquered?"

"No."

"Did she give any reason for coming to you?"

"If you know a better place to come to, Colonel Gore," replied Mr. Stanton, tartly, "I shall be glad to hear its name."

"Quite, quite." Gore nodded soothingly. "Well, now let us see if we can get on another step. Last week we concentrated all the talent of Messrs. Gore & Tolley's staff on your uncle Harold. It seemed pretty hopeless, but in the end we had a bit of luck. Messrs. Trebutt & Markham, the furniture people in Hampstead, by whom he was employed from 1889 until his death in 1891, went out of business in 1904. It was never a flourishing concern, and in 1904 it went phut altogether. The premises lay vacant for a number of years and were eventually converted into a garage. However, with some trouble, we succeeded in digging out a Mr. Tomlinson who had been head shopwalker there for many years before they shut down. He knew all about your uncle Harold and

about his daughter Pauline. She's dead, by the way. Died at Port Elizabeth in 1903."

Mr. Stanton raised his eyes from his watch.

"Oh, did she? What became of her husband?"

"As you had heard, he was killed during the siege of Ladysmith—in 1899. However, to return to Mr. Tomlinson. It seems that a daughter of his had married a brother of Herbert Brazil's—they seem to have been pretty intimate with the Brazils. And in that way the Tomlinsons had kept more or less in touch with Mrs. Brazil for a considerable time after her father's death. As far as I could gather, however, what they definitely knew about her was this. She and her husband and the child Paul went back to South Africa in 1892. Brazil got a job in the customs at Port Elizabeth and stayed in it until the South African War, when he joined up and got killed. Only a few months after his death, Pauline Brazil married again, and in 1900 had a child by her second husband. That was the last the Tomlinsons knew of her except that she died in 1903 or thereabouts at Capetown. The interesting fact in the story is, I think, that she had a second husband and a second child. Unfortunately, old Tomlinson couldn't give me the name. But he gave me his daughter's address in New York—she's living there now—and I've wired her. I've also wired the South Africa Police. But perhaps, Mr. Stanton, you ——"

He paused. The door of the office, which had remained ajar, opened and Miss Higgins peeped in playfully.

"Oh, Mr. Stanton," she began, *"could* you possibly ——" She paused, in charming dismay at disturbing so solemn a conclave. Mr. Stanton crossed the room to her, picking up his hat and looking at his watch once more.

"Anything I can do for you, Miss Higgins? I'm in a tremendous hurry."

"It's just to ask whether you could find room for a couple of small cases of Mrs. Tanquered's up here."

"Up here?" Mr. Stanton turned to look at the safes against the wall behind him. "I haven't much space up here. What are they?"

"Some gold plate which belonged to Mrs. Tanquered's grandfather. He gave them to her as a wedding present. Frightfully valuable, I suppose—but perfectly hideous—and, of course, absolutely useless. You do store specially valuable things up here in those safes sometimes, your son told me."

Mr. Stanton was halfway through the door now.

"What size are the cases?"

"Not very large. Perhaps you'd like to look at them?"

A belated smile and bow for Gore and the inspector, and the radiant intruder had vanished into the dimness of the corridor leading to the lift. Mr. Stanton turned.

"Sorry to leave you, gentlemen. But I must get off. I don't care two hoots if the woman had a dozen children. All this business is entirely beside the point, I assure you. You're merely wasting your time, Inspector."

He jammed on his hat, adjusted his overcoat with a little jerk of neck and shoulders, and disappeared. The eyes of both the men left standing by the fire remained fixed for a moment or two thoughtfully on the place where the spruce, energetic little figure had last been visible to them. But to neither of them did it occur that that was to be the last time either of them was to see Mr. James Stanton alive.

The inspector picked up his bowler. "Precious anxious not to talk about his family affairs, isn't he? Why *did* that uncle of his clear out of the business? Did he get into trouble?"

"Apparently not."

"Then why?"

"Quite. Why?"

"Well, anyhow, Colonel, what's it come to? You seem to think there's something interesting about this Pauline Brazil's second husband. Is he alive?"

"Tomlinson couldn't tell me. It's the second child I'm interested in, though. You see, if it was born in 1900, it would be twenty-eight now."

"Naturally. Well?"

"Well, we're looking for some one who was staying at the Bower of Bliss that night who had a reason for killing both Brazil and Mr. Stanton, aren't we?"

"*You* are," remarked Shadgold, drily. "I'm not."

"You're looking for Burgin, anyhow. Same thing."

"Oh, Burgin be blowed!" blew the inspector. "I'm not interested in Burgin."

"Merely because you don't know enough about him. For instance, what age do you think he is?"

"I *know*. Close on thirty."

"About twenty-eight, in fact."

Shadgold thought over that for a moment, then laughed incredulously.

"What? You're not trying to make out that *he's* this second child of Pauline Brazil's?"

"He *could* be."

"Oh, *could* be——"

"You see—if he was Paul Brazil's brother, that would account for the partnership between them. And if he was also the grandson of the man who was turned out of the business by Mrs. Stanton's father, that suggests a possible connection with Mr. Stanton, doesn't it? Then there's the fact that

Burgin was at Danmore Lodge the morning of Young Greston's death. You hadn't known that, had you?"

The inspector hadn't. He allowed himself to show some slight chagrin as he listened to Gore's account of his visit to Shippen that afternoon.

"Nothing in it, Colonel," he decided, picking up his bowler again. "So far as the child is concerned, we have Waudby's certificate, given at the time. It says the child was suffocated by the gravel falling on him. That's good enough for me or anyone. No use Waudby saying now he certified what he didn't believe. Even supposing he thought, at the time, what he didn't certify, what is there to show he thought right? Not a darn thing. Not a scrap of evidence to hand to a jury. And nothing else is any use. Not a soul suggested at the time anything but that the boy had been suffocated by the gravel. I agree there was some talk about the younger Chrisson. But what was said was that he had tilted the cart—possibly had tied up the child's hands. No one said he had suffocated the child first. Fact is, you've got a bee in your bonnet about this suffocation business, Colonel. You know you have. And you're trying to fit the facts to your theory. Fatal. If you'll allow me to say so, the mistake the amateur always makes."

"Very irritating to the professional, I admit," twinkled Gore, "especially when *he* can't fit them to *his*. How did you get on with Mrs. Tanquered this afternoon, by the way?"

Shadgold did not deign to make any response to that inquiry. As they went down the spiral staircase and made their way through the musty gloom of the storerooms towards the street, he paused twice to point out the absurdity of the "chain" theory and of the latest suggestion with regard to Burgin. However, he laid aside his little irritability as they entered the office, where Miss Higgins was chatting with

young Stanton and the typist. Her lovely gray eyes were alight with gaiety over the pretentious ugliness of Mrs. Tanquered's gold plate, one case of which lay open on a table. The two men saluted her and passed out into the ill-lighted little side-street.

"Making the running, young Harry, isn't he?" commented Shadgold. "Wish I stored furniture. Seems a more popular sort of job than mine. Wonder why young Henry always gets his ears back when he sees me. Perhaps he thinks I'm trying to cut him out."

"Funny," mused Gore. "I thought it was *I* who put the wind up Master Henry. I'm going to do it again, I'm afraid. I've left a glove behind me. You going back to Bridgwater tonight?"

"Not me," grinned the inspector. "I find the air up here helps a lot when you've things to think out. And Pola Negri's on at the Regent."

He waved a hand and went off towards the glare of King Street. Gore glanced round casually. A respectable-looking young man, who had paused to light a cigarette a little way down, moved up to him.

"I've found out most of what you wanted to know, sir. The salesroom and the office shut at six. Everyone goes away then —the day people, I mean—unless there are vans loading or unloading at the entrance in the lane. When they've finished there, a foreman shuts up. Hardly ever later than seven or half-past."

"Who's in the place at night, besides Mr. Stanton?"

"Mr. Stanton's housekeeper—an old woman—and a night watchman. He comes on at nine."

"Old or young?"

"Old."

"Young Mr. Stanton?"

"He goes away about six, usually."

"I see. Just a moment, Reddings. I've forgotten a glove."

Gore turned about and entered Messrs. Stantons' premises again. The typist, already preparing to depart, looked up and smiled as he asked permission to retrieve his property. Halfway up the spiral staircase, however, the sound of voices brought him to a pause.

"Naughty boy. What would your wife say?"

The voice that answered was blurred by the foolish huskiness of the excited male.

"I don't care. I care about nothing except you. Don't you know it? Oh, my darling, don't you know it?"

A silvery little laugh, half mocking, half yielding, answered this passionate outburst of young Mr. Stanton's throaty tenor. There was an interval of silence—another little silvery laugh.

"No, no, bad boy. That is enough. We must be sensible. Besides, I must run away now. Such a bore. I'm dining with some people and going to the theater ——"

"Who are the people?" demanded the tenor, jealously.

"Oh, nobody at all thrilling, my dear. You don't think that—after *this*—I should find anyone or anything very thrilling?"

Another silence. Another little silvery laugh. The tenor was inarticulate for a space.

"Do show me which of those safes you're going to lock up my cases in. This one?"

"No. My father keeps his own papers and things in that one. They'll go into the big safe—there. But I'm afraid I can't lock them up for you."

"Why? Haven't you got keys?"

"No. My father carries the keys about with him. Won't

trust even his beloved only son with them. However, I assure you that the cases will be perfectly safe here until he comes. In fact, there'll be no one in the building except old Martha—the old dame who does for him. As she's about two hundred years of age, I don't fancy she's likely to pinch them."

"Very well, Mr. Stanton. Thanks ever so much for taking so much trouble."

The tenor was reproachful.

"*Mr.* Stanton . . . ?"

"Well, Henry, then. No, I don't like 'Henry.' It's too goody-goody. Though you are a little goody-goody, aren't you?"

Another silence, presumably filled by young Mr. Stanton's efforts to refute this charge. Another silvery laugh.

"Now—be good."

"You'll come early tomorrow?"

"As if I should miss one of our few moments—now—— No, please don't bother to come down. Better not. That girl in the office is jealous of me, I believe. Good-by, my dear."

"My darling——"

Under the circumstances, Gore had decided that his glove might quite well remain where he had left it, for the present. He retreated down the staircase and retired into the obscurity of the nearest storeroom.

Light feet tripped down the iron stairs, tripped away in the direction of the lower office. After a judicious interval Gore emerged from his hiding-place and climbed to Mr. Stanton's office. The younger Mr. Stanton, preparing to go home and bent over a small wash-up in a corner of the room, apparently did not hear him enter it. At the sound of his voice he sprang round with a little gasp, as if a red-hot poker had been applied to the portion of his anatomy a moment before the most

prominent. He stared, pale and speechless, while Gore apologized for his intrusion and collected his glove. And ultimately he could achieve nothing more than a throaty "Righto" by way of farewell.

Gore's face was rather grim as he rejoined Reddings in the street.

"I've another job o' work for you, I'm afraid, Reddings," he said.

CHAPTER XVIII

About a quarter past four on the following afternoon—an afternoon so dark that the lights had been on in the office since three o'clock—Miss Herrick sat before the office fire, toasting a bisected currant bun. At her feet inside the fender a teapot warmed preparatorily; on the fire a small kettle had just begun to sing. Its song formed a pleasant background to the little reverie in which Miss Herrick was indulging.

Christmas was already within measurable distance, and that morning she had received from a friend who lived at Bournemouth an invitation to spend the holiday down there. Miss Herrick—no longer very young, never very attractive, and existing on a wage of twenty-five shillings a week—had few friends; normally her Christmas would pass drearily in her lodgings, brightened only by a visit to a cinema and the receipt of probably a solitary Christmas card. Now the friend at Bournemouth was married comfortably and prosperously; Christmas under her roof would be a very different and very desirable thing. The difficulty for Miss Herrick was that, for a holiday of two days only, the journey to Bournemouth seemed too long and too expensive. Three days would make it worth while; but two, out of which must be deducted the time spent in traveling, she had decided would not. It was, therefore, her intention to apply to Mr. Stanton, senior, for an additional day—the day following St. Stephen's Day. A reply must go to her friend not later than next day, since, failing her acceptance, some one else, it had been conveyed, would occupy the Bournemouth spare bedroom and eat the Bournemouth

plum pudding and pull the Bournemouth crackers. That afternoon, accordingly, Mr. Stanton must be approached.

At no time was Mr. Stanton easy to approach upon the subject of days—or even hours—off. Upon that particular day there were special difficulties. He had gone up to Chippenham early that morning to conduct a sale, and had not yet returned, although expected before four. Mr. Stanton, junior, who had been on the fidget since three o'clock—Miss Herrick, naturally, knew why—came out of his office as the bun was being buttered.

"The guv'nor's late," he remarked. "Missed his train, I bet. Won't get back until after six now, I expect."

This surmise cast a shadow upon Miss Herrick's hopes. Mr. Stanton, senior, irritated by missing his proper train and arriving after six o'clock, the hour of her departure from the office, would not be approachable that afternoon. Her expression was a little dejected as she answered a telephone call and then reseated herself to her modest tea. Just her luck. And even if he didn't miss his train, this appointment which she had just made for him would certainly upset him at the end of a tiring day. Just her luck.

At twenty to five Mr. James Stanton arrived, however, in good humor, having carried through a heavy sale for an old client satisfactorily. When Miss Herrick, eying him circumspectly from behind her glasses, delivered the telephone message to him, he listened affably.

"Mrs. Lockett rang up just now, Mr. Stanton."

"Mrs. Lockett? Oh yes? What did she want?"

"She wants to see that flat in Cornwall Place again. She asked if she could see it this afternoon."

"But she decided definitely four days ago that she didn't

want it. Confound these women —— This afternoon? What time?"

"She mentioned five o'clock. I told her you hadn't come back from Chippenham."

"Well, but that made no difference. You sent her up the keys?"

"No, Mr. Stanton. She asked if you could meet her at the flat at five and bring the keys with you. She couldn't call for them here, as she's going back to Taunton this evening and is very pressed for time. When she heard that you hadn't come back from Chippenham yet, she said she'd ring up again, about a quarter to five."

"Oh well, she's had a quarter of an hour. She has probably changed her mind again by this time."

But in effect the telephone rang again while Miss Herrick was still smiling dutifully at this sally of her employer's.

"Where's Mr. Henry?" demanded Mr. Stanton, senior, staying her progress towards the instrument. "Why didn't he go?"

"Mrs. Lockett, I understood her to say, wants to see you personally about the doing-up of the flat if she takes it."

"Oh, all right, all right," said Mr. Stanton. "Say I'll go. Say I'll get up there as soon as I've had a cup of tea."

He waited until Miss Herrick had replaced the receiver again. "Where's Mr. Henry? Dancing attendance on Miss Higgins, I suppose. Tell him I've got back, will you."

"No. Miss Higgins hasn't been here this afternoon, Mr. Stanton. I think Mr. Henry has gone up to your office." Miss Herrick took her courage in both hands. "Oh, Mr. Stanton— I wonder if you could possibly give me an additional day off at Christmas ——"

But Mr. Stanton was a little annoyed by the prospect of a

hurried tea—a meal over which he liked to linger—and a journey, unaided by any 'bus, to Cornwall Place instead of a comfortable fireside meditation upon the successes of the day.

"Don't wonder, Miss Herrick," he said, sardonically. "*I* shall be working on Christmas Day. Have the keys of that flat for me when I come down, please."

Pink to the roots of her unsatisfactory hair, Miss Herrick turned away and took from a long board attached to one wall of the office one of several bunches of labeled keys hanging from its hooks. Having laid these on her desk, she stood waiting until her employer's bustling footsteps had died away in the distance, her eyes filling with tears. After some moments of injured meditation she found the *mot juste*.

"Genome!" she ground through her unsatisfactory teeth. "Miserable, mean ole Genome!"

But further misfortune was to befall Miss Herrick that dark afternoon. For when Mr. James Stanton came downstairs again and she had handed him the labeled bunch of keys, he informed her that he would have several letters to write, and requested her, therefore, not to leave before his return. A rapid calculation informed Miss Herrick that his return could not be expected until considerably after six at earliest. Several letters—— She knew only too well what Mr. Stanton's dictation of letters was. Then the letters must be typed. Quite possibly one at least would be altered and redictated. It would be seven o'clock before she got away.

Mr. Henry, removing the traces of buttered toast from his mustache with a chastely sumptuous silk handkerchief, reappeared, and with elaborate casualness inquired if anyone had called during his absence upstairs. Knowing full well what caller Mr. Henry had hoped for, Miss Herrick made her

"No" as acid as she dared. She might have to submit to working overtime unpaid, but she was not going to aid or abet Mr. Henry's philandering with lady customers. When, a little after half-past five, Miss Higgins—delicious in moleskins, fragrant of violets, eyes asparkle and color bright from the frosty air without—did arrive and Mr. Henry popped out of his office like a silly Jack-in-the-box to receive her, Miss Herrick turned her back upon them ostentatiously.

Disappointment was audible in Mr. Henry's voice when he learned that, various delays having prevented Miss Higgins from coming up to Linwood from Wraxton Court earlier that afternoon, she could work for but an hour at most. She hoped that she would inconvenience no one if she *did* work an hour and stay on until half-past six.

"No, no. Not in the least," Mr. Henry assured her. He turned to the typist. "There will be no necessity for you to remain on, you know, Miss Herrick."

"I have to remain on," replied Miss Herrick, sharply. "Mr. James has some letters to write when he comes back. I shall probably be here until half-past seven."

Utterly indifferent to Miss Herrick's doom, Mr. Henry escorted Miss Higgins out of the office gallantly. Miss Herrick laid a sheet of the office notepaper on her pad and devoted herself to the composition of a regretful letter to her friend at Bournemouth. When she had covered both sides of the sheet, it occurred to her that Mr. James might possibly relent if he kept her late that evening. She laid aside her first effort and embarked upon a second accepting the invitation conditionally and promising a definite reply on the morrow.

This was a delicate task. The minutes slipped by. When she raised her eyes to the office clock again, she discovered, to her surprise, that the time was ten minutes to seven.

A little bit too much of a good thing. She stamped her envelope angrily, tore up her first reply and threw it into the waste-paper basket, and then changed the date stamp violently. If Mr. James expected her to stay on until eight o'clock, he was jolly well mistaken. At five minutes past seven she put on her coat and hat. At ten minutes past she put on one glove. At a quarter past she decided that if Mr. James had not come by half-past she would go home. At twenty-five past she left the office and made her way through the darkness to the place where she expected to find Mr. Henry still engaged in his philandering. Better tell Mr. Henry she was going home, she supposed.

But no sign of Mr. Henry was to be discerned. As he lived up in the direction of the Downs, and for convenience' sake frequently left the premises by its back door—a wicket in the big gates admitting from the lane at the rear—she concluded that he and Miss Higgins had gone out that way. She went by devious ways to the foot of the spiral staircase and called up.

"Are you there, Martha?"

After some moments Mr. Stanton's aged housekeeper answered, unseen, from the upper gloom.

"Yes. What is it? I'm coming."

"Is Mr. Henry up there?"

"No, he isn't. Nor Mr. James, neither, and his dinner ready this half-hour."

"Oh well, I suppose he won't be long now."

"Well, if he is, he must put up with what he finds. I'm going out now, anyhow, come or not."

The injured Martha was heard to descend the staircase slowly, and emerged into the light of the gas-jet at its foot, attired in the bonnet and mantle which had done her service

for half a century. Her sister was real bad with a chewmer, she said, and she was going over to sit with her for an hour. She had left Mr. James chicken and pudding in the oven, and if they were burned to a cinder by the time he took them out of it, it was his own fault, going off and never saying when he was coming back or if he was coming back. Grumbling and gasping, the old lady hobbled along the pitch-black arcades by Miss Herrick's side until they reached the office. She paused as she let herself out by the front door.

"You're not coming, ain't you, miss?"

Miss Herrick, sorely tempted to follow her, hesitated. To follow might mean to sacrifice the chance of that pleasant, comfortable Christmas. Ultimately she shook her head. "I'll wait for a bit, Martha," she decided. The door clicked behind the old lady's shuffling feet. Miss Herrick crossed the office and repaired the fire. She would wait until eight.

In Mr. Henry's office she found the morning's *Daily Telegraph* and, returning to her fire, beguiled a quarter of an hour with its aid, her head turning towards the street door whenever footsteps approached it. But the little backwater led nowhere in particular and, little used by day, was almost deserted at night. The footsteps always passed and left a deeper silence.

Gradually the silence obtruded itself upon her notice and disturbed her vaguely. The office, every smallest detail of whose appearance had been familiar to her for seven years, was contriving somehow an effect of unfamiliarity—almost of hostility, as if it resented her presence at that unusual hour and desired to be left to itself for the night. She resolved to make some tea and put her little kettle on the fire. The second half of the bun, unconsumed at her last depressed meal, would satisfy her meager appetite for supper.

While she waited for the kettle to boil, a thought of simple guile presented itself to her. Mr. Stanton's chicken and pudding would grow uneatable if left too long in the oven. Why not take them out, place them on the top of the range, and be able to inform Mr. James when he arrived—no doubt, very hungry—that she had thus rescued his dinner from ruin. Perhaps, in gratitude, he would repent of his refusal.

She opened the inner door of the office and, passing across a vague no-man's land of empty passage, reached the storage department and proceeded down the arcade which led directly to the iron staircase. At its far end, the gas-jet burned dimly at half-cock, the only illumination. Hundreds of times, of winter afternoons, she had made the journey up to Mr. Stanton's rooms without adverting to its dreariness. But tonight the arcade seemed longer and darker than usual; the doors of the storerooms looked, as they had seemed to Simon Wyckham Melhuish, like the mouths of black, menacing caves; the silence and the darkness that mounted to the unseen roof hung above her like a weight. She was not an unusually nervous or unimaginative young woman, but when she had gone a little way down the arcade she paused. Better wait for Mr. Stanton in the lower office, perhaps; she could volunteer to go upstairs with him and get his meal ready. But in that case, the chicken must meanwhile be left to its fate in the oven.

While, unwilling to abandon her first intention, she stood irresolutely, looking towards the light at the staircase, a sudden sharp, jingling sound—small and remote, yet in the silence as acute to her startled nerves as a peal of thunder—wheeled her about with a little gasp to face the direction from which she judged it to have come.

Somewhere to her left hand. On her left were three other arcades, on her right two more, all running parallel with that

in which she stood and connected by cross passages. Impossible to be sure, on account of the echoes under the high roof; but she felt pretty certain that the sound had been to her left, either in the next arcade or the one beyond it. The night watchman was always grumbling about the rats that haunted the place at night, and a rat might, she supposed, upset some small metal object in one of the storerooms. But the sound had been a definite, specific one—the sound of an article not likely to be lying about loose in a storeroom—the jingle of a bunch of keys falling on the floor. Small keys—and a number of them.

She stood listening for some moments, but there was no further sound. A hank of curtain rings, left on top of a packing-case and disturbed by the rats, might very well have made the noise. She turned and went back to the office; and finding that her kettle had boiled, made her tea and, while she drank it, read earnestly for improvement's sake the section devoted to "The World" in *Whitaker's Almanac*. She had begun to realize once more that Providence had provided her with an intellect unequal to scientific intelligence, when the electric bell at the office door burst into clamor abruptly and caused her unsatisfactory heart to miss a beat.

She jumped up. Twenty minutes to nine. The chicken must be a leathery ruin by this time. Why had she been such an idiotic little funk?

But when she opened the street door, she beheld, instead of Mr. James Stanton's portly little figure, a tall spare one which at first she did not recognize. The smile which she had prepared for her employer faded, but returned at the sound of the caller's voice, when he inquired if Mr. Stanton, senior, was in. She had been favorably impressed by Colonel Gore's appearance on the occasion of his previous visits to the

establishment. His voice gave her now an agreeable sense of security. She stood back in invitation to him to enter.

"I'm expecting Mr. Stanton at any minute," she explained. "I can't think what can have kept him. He went out before five to keep an appointment up at Cornwall Place. I know he expected to get back fairly soon, because he asked me to remain on for some letters he wanted to write. I wonder whether he can have told Mr. Henry if he had somewhere else to go. I'll just ring Mr. Henry up and inquire."

But Mr. Henry, it seemed, had gone out again immediately after dinner and had not returned to his house yet. Miss Herrick rang off and called up another number, having consulted an address-book.

"Is that the Beaufort Private Hotel? Messrs. Stanton, Linwood branch, speaking. Can I speak to Mrs. Lockett, please? . . . I beg your pardon? Not there now? I beg your —— . . . She went back to Taunton three days ago? You're quite sure about that? Because she rang us up this afternoon. . . . Yes, this afternoon. She said she was going back to Taunton this evening. . . . Must have ——? . . . Well, perhaps so. Thank you.

"Well, that's funny," said Miss Herrick, as she turned from the telephone to regard the visitor. The gravity of his expression caught her attention. She felt encouraged to explain to an attentive listener what she thought funny and why.

"You see, Mr. Stanton went to meet this lady—Mrs. Lockett —at a flat in Cornwall Place, at five. Mrs. Lockett made the appointment by telephone and she said then that she had to go back to Taunton, where she lives, this evening. But they say at that hotel I rang up just now—that's where she was staying in Linwood—that she went back to Taunton three days ago. It seems funny. Of course she may have left the Beau-

fort and gone to stay somewhere else, without telling them. . . ."

Miss Herrick mused for a moment.

"I suppose it *was* Mrs. Lockett who rang us up this afternoon. Yes, I'm sure she said, 'I'm Mrs. Lockett.'"

The visitor was frowning.

"Had you heard her speak over the 'phone before?" he asked.

"No. She called here at the office when she was after the flat first."

"First? Then she had been interested in this flat before? When was that?"

"About a week ago, I think it was, she called here the first time. She saw the flat and decided that it wouldn't suit her and sent back the keys by a maid. That was on Monday—four days ago." The typist referred to a ledger. "Yes, last Monday. Then this afternoon she rang up, saying she wanted to see the flat again and would like Mr. James Stanton to meet her there about five, as she was pressed for time and had to go back to Taunton this evening. So Mr. Stanton hurried off up there at once."

The visitor's interests in Miss Herrick's recital had sharpened noticeably.

"She asked specially that Mr. James Stanton should meet her at the flat?"

"Yes, specially. She wanted to arrange with him about having the flat done up, she said, if she took it on."

Gore reflected for a moment.

"Cornwall Place. That's one of those quiet roads near the College, isn't it? Is it an empty flat?"

"Well, no—not empty, exactly. The present tenants are trying to sublet furnished for the last two years of a five years'

lease, you see. They're away just now—but I mean the flat isn't without a tenant actually."

"But the tenants are away?"

"Yes. For three weeks, I think."

"Do you know anything about this Mrs. Lockett?"

The question was asked so sharply that Miss Herrick took a good look at Colonel Gore's face before she answered it. She divined in it something more than a merely polite interest in the affairs of Messrs. Stantons' office. Oh yes, they knew quite a good deal about Mrs. Lockett. She was the wife of a retired lieutenant commander, who lived at Taunton. Her only daughter having recently married a parson attached to Christ Church in Linwood, she had decided to transfer herself thither to be near her. A most charming woman, if slightly fussy—about forty-five—slightly lame. Fairly well off, Miss Herrick thought, since she contemplated taking an expensive flat.

The door-bell shrilled again as the typist completed her little inventory of Mrs. Lockett's desirabilities as a tenant. She jumped up.

"This is probably Mr. Stanton now."

"I think not," said Gore. "We should have heard Mr. Stanton's footsteps. I rather expect this is a friend of mine—Inspector Shadgold. He has a professional weakness for rubber soles. Shall I let him in?"

Something queer had certainly got into Miss Herrick's office this evening. She nodded nervously and waited until Gore had admitted the burly Inspector. The brief conversation which took place at the door reached her alarmed ears. This was an arranged meeting, then. The police. The thought of contact with the police made her tremble slightly. Something had happened——

And yet the new arrival's voice was cheery and matter-of-fact enough.

"Good evening, Colonel. Cold, isn't it? I got the wire you sent to Bridgwater only an hour and a half ago. I was down at Minehead all day. What's to do now? Got another red herring for me, eh?"

Gore shut the street door and turned to the typist.

"This is Inspector Shadgold, Miss Herrick," he said, glancing towards the closed inner door and lowering his voice. "I feel sure that you are a sensible girl and that you won't allow the inspector to alarm you. I want you, please, to tell him, as briefly as possible, what you have just told me about this appointment of Mr. Stanton's."

Despite her nervousness, Miss Herrick told her little story with admirable succinctness. The inspector turned his sunburnt face from hers to Gore's when the story ended, and waited in an expectant silence of mild amusement.

"The point being," Gore commented, "that it is now nine o'clock, or almost, and Mr. Stanton has not yet come back from his appointment with Mrs. Lockett. And the probability being that it was not Mrs. Lockett who made the appointment."

"I may be quite mistaken," Miss Herrick interjected, hurriedly, eager to stifle her own nameless fears, "I had never heard Mrs. Lockett speak on the telephone before, you know. Though I *did* think her voice sounded different, somehow——"

"Well, this is all mighty mysterious, Colonel," smiled the inspector. "I'm waiting to hear what you've brought me up from Bridgwater on a night like this for. I mean—you only heard about this business of the flat and Mr. Stanton's not

being back yet a few minutes ago. You knew nothing about it when you wired me from London at three o'clock."

"I knew," said Gore, a little snappily, "that Mr. Stanton was in serious danger."

"Psha! danger! What danger?"

"At all events, I had good grounds for believing so. *You* know that I've suspected something of the sort all along. That's why I've come straight up here from the station to see Mr. Stanton—and why I asked you to meet me here. The devil of it is that it looks as if we'd got here too late."

He wheeled round to the typist.

"You've been here since the place shut up at six, Miss Herrick—continuously?"

"Yes."

"Here in this office?"

"Yes."

"You haven't left this office since six o'clock?"

"Oh yes. About half-past seven I went along to ask the housekeeper if Mr. Henry was upstairs."

"Was he upstairs then?"

"No. He had gone away."

"But if you had been here in this office, you would have seen him go away, wouldn't you?"

"He often leaves by the back door. It's shorter for him."

"At any rate, the housekeeper was upstairs then. Is she up there now?"

"No. She went out about half-past seven."

"So that you have been the only person on the premises since half past seven?"

"Yes."

"Since that time you have been here in this office?"

"Except for a few moments. I thought of going up to Mr.

Stanton's room to see if his dinner was all right. The housekeeper left it waiting for him in the oven when she went out. I went part of the way. But I got nervous—so I came back to the office."

Gore pounced on the word. "Nervous? Why?"

"Well—I thought I heard a noise somewhere in the storerooms."

"A noise? Some one moving about?"

"No. It was like a bunch of keys falling. It was some distance away from me—I thought in the next corridor."

"A bunch of keys?" Gore repeated. "How long ago was that?"

The curtness with which the question was thrown at her confused Miss Herrick for a moment.

"About half an hour ago, I think. No—longer. About eight o'clock—about three-quarters of an hour ago."

"Which corridor did you think the noise came from? There are six, aren't there? Reckoning from the front of the building, which?"

"I thought the noise was in—well it would be the third counting from the street."

Gore nodded.

"Quite. You came back to the office then—when you heard the noise?"

"Yes."

"Heard anything since?"

"No, nothing."

"Your night watchman comes on at nine, doesn't he? Just keep him here, will you, Miss Herrick, when he arrives. I believe he's an elderly person. And you might ring up Mr. Henry again and ask him to get down here as quickly as he can. Do that, will you?" Gore turned to Shadgold, who

had listened with corrugated brow to this interrogatory of the typist. "I shouldn't be surprised, Inspector, if this time I managed to supply you with the salt to put on the herring's tail."

He seated himself and took off his shoes quickly, then opened the inner door quietly. "Come along. We're probably late. But in case we're not ——"

"Where are we going?" demanded Shadgold, following none the less. Gore threw a last question to Miss Herrick. "Any lights on—between this and Mr. Stanton's rooms?"

"Yes. There's a gas-jet at the foot of the stairs by the lift."

But when the two men had crossed the intervening passages and reached the high arched entrance to the storage department, absolute darkness confronted them.

"Where the juice's that gas-jet she spoke of?" muttered Shadgold.

But his companion was already lost to view. Groping for guidance against pillar buttresses and unseen bulks—furniture and packing-cases stacked outside the storerooms, the Inspector surmised—he pursued as swiftly as the pitch blackness and frequent collisions permitted. At the staircase he found Gore awaiting him impatiently.

"Hell, man! don't blow that way. I can hear you a mile away."

Up the iron stairs the inspector was again a bad second. On the landing at the top an arm gripped his and a peremptory voice whispered in his ear.

"Remember where those safes are?"

"Yes."

"Good. Make straight for that side of the room when I open the door."

Up there, too, absolute darkness reigned, save for a faint

glow visible through an open door—presumably the kitchen range—and a thin line of light beneath a shut one. For an instant the two men stood, tense and poised, their feet toeing that riband of light.

If Inspector Shadgold had any definite expectation at that moment, it was that inside that door they would find Mr. Henry Stanton ransacking his father's safes. A slight resentment at having allowed himself to be hustled had disturbed his balance a little and interfered with his hurried attempt to arrive at some definite conclusion with regard to this latest vagary of the impulsive Colonel's. But that was the conclusion at which he had arrived, and he thought that quite possibly there was something in it. When Gore flung the door open abruptly, therefore, he went into the room like a cyclone and all but trampled on two figures which lay in his path, crumpled up in desperate embrace on the floor, a few feet inside the door. His eyes took in a blood-spattered nightmare of a room, strewn with overturned furniture, broken crockery and glass, coins, table cutlery, brass cups and pots, and papers of all sizes and shapes scattered as if by the fury of a lunatic. He saw that all three safes stood open and that the carpet near them was littered with their contents. Then his amazed gaze came back to the two motionless figures in the foreground, so closely enlocked that at first glance they had seemed one.

"Burgin!" he ejaculated, and then saw that the underneath figure was a woman's. He stooped and, with Gore's aid, pulled off the tweed-clad weight that pinned down the second head, and stared in utter consternation at the bruised and battered face which it took him some moments to identify.

"Miss Higgins! . . . What the juice——?"

He continued to stare mutely, while, mechanically, he as-

sisted to disentangle the combatants. But he could find no other relief.

"What the juice?" he murmured again, and turned his head towards the door leading to the adjoining bedroom. Despite the gravity of the moment, Gore, bent over Burgin somewhat anxiously, could not restrain a smile.

"Not satisfied, Inspector?" He pointed to the bunch of keys which hung from the lock of one of the safes. "If you're looking for Mr. James Stanton, I'm rather afraid you'll find him at that flat in Cornwall Place. Those are his keys, you see."

The inspector didn't see, and said so. He had picked up a vicious-looking narrow-bladed knife which had been concealed beneath Burgin, and, ignoring Gore's suggestion that he should get busy on Miss Herrick's telephone—there was none upstairs, apparently—he hung, dubiously.

"Seems it was she who used this little doodle-dasher," he remarked. "She's got some blood on her, but no cuts, as far as I can see. That's queer. He's made a nice old mess of her face, the brute. And look at her clothes—torn to flitters. Pretty bad, isn't he? Better get a doctor first, I suppose."

But at the door he turned and came back.

"Well, you've delivered the goods this time, Colonel, I admit. Though hang me if I can make head or tail of *this* picnic. They've had a scrap—that's clear enough. And she pretty well did him in before he did her in pretty well. But can *you* tell me what the juice they were doing here? There's those two cases with Mrs. Tanquered's plate in them there in that end safe, I see. Gold, isn't it? Think Burgin was after that, and somehow she caught him at it and went for him?"

"I do not," replied Gore, distinctly, retiring into the adjoining room in search of water.

Still Inspector Shagold lingered, thinking hard. His thumb jerked towards Burgin, who had just groaned faintly.

"Expect you were right, after all, then, Colonel, about this beggar being the other kid of Pauline what's her-name."

Gore emptied a considerable portion of the contents of a water-jug over the swollen, distorted face of the second combatant.

"I was not right," he replied, again very distinctly. "I regret to say that the other kid of Pauline what's-her-name was a girl and its name was Higgins. A reply to my wire to New York came today while I was in London. One of my staff met me at the station with it just now. In point of fact, I went up to London to make inquiries at St. Waldo's Hospital about Miss Higgins. It was well known there that she had come from South Africa and got letters from friends out there."

"Well, I'll go to hell ——" ejaculated the inspector.

"I wish to God you would!" exploded Gore with heartiness. "At any rate as far as that telephone ——"

This time the inspector, still thinking hard, went, and, after a dubious trial of Burgin's heart, Gore rose to his feet and began an examination of the litter scattered about the room. But he guessed that what he was looking for was not there. Some one else had looked before him.

Mr. James Stanton was then lying, half in and half out of a very prettily furnished sitting-room opening off the hall of the ground-floor flat at No. 9 Cornwall Place. He had been lying there since a few minutes after five o'clock that afternoon, and when they found him, about half-past nine, he was quite cold and his face was not pleasant to look at. In his hands was the spectacle-case which they had failed to open—probably their first failure to do their duty. The man-

ner of his death was simple and obvious; he had been stunned by a blow from a kitchen pestle and then suffocated to death. At the request of the police the police surgeon paid particular attention to certain markings under his chin and under his nose.

Despite all efforts, no trace of Mr. Henry Stanton had by that hour been discovered. The Westmouth Detective Division was being unusually active just then.

CHAPTER XIX

Inspector Shadgold and Inspector Lord, the shining light of the very efficient department referred to, found Colonel Gore in the lounge of his hotel that night a little after eleven o'clock. He was preparing to go to bed and didn't seem in the least pleased to see them. Lord, a silent, granite-faced youngish man sporting a tie which attracted Gore's attention, left the gambit to his partner.

"Well, Colonel, we've got Henry Stanton, all right. He was at the theater, he says."

"Nothing else of any interest, I expect?"

"Well, according to his account—and Miss Higgins's account—he left her at half-past six, sorting out two boxes of books he had opened for her. He went home then, he says, had dinner at seven—this is O. K.—and went out to the Royalty Theater immediately afterwards. He can't give any explanation of what has happened. The only bit of information we got out of him is about those cases with Mrs. Tanquered's stuff in them. The old man had put them in one of the big safes, it seems. But this afternoon, while they were having tea, just before his father went to keep that appointment, the old man told him that he had put the two cases in the small safe—the one we found them in. You were right about the keys. His father always carried them round with him. So that fixes *that*. Whoever opened the safes at Stantons' did in the old man first at Cornwall Place."

A yawn was the sole acknowledgment vouchsafed to this admission.

"So Miss Higgins has recovered sufficiently to tell a story, has she?"

"She says that she went on working at the books after Henry Stanton left her, re-sorting them into the cases. She can't say exactly how long she worked, but a considerable time. She was stooping over the cases, anyhow, when she was struck by some one and, she believes, became unconscious. The next thing she remembers is finding herself in the dark, lying across the packing-cases. After a bit she made her way up to Mr. Stanton's rooms, knowing that there was a servant up there, and when she got up there she saw Burgin standing in front of the safes, searching in one of them. They were all open then, she says. He turned and rushed at her and dragged her into the room and beat her savagely, and she thinks she must have been unconscious again then for a bit. When she came to she saw him bending over her with a knife in his hand. She snatched at it and got it out of his hand and struck at him two or three times. Then she lost consciousness again and doesn't remember anything until you brought her to."

"Quite a good story," Gore remarked "—considering. What about Burgin?"

"Bad. Matter of a few hours, they think. The knife got him twice in the same lung. They can't stop the hemorrhage."

"Another thirty-second of an inch," commented Lord, "and there'd have been none to stop."

"A little knowledge of anatomy is useful at times," said Gore, drily. "Found out anything about the knife?"

"Not yet."

"What about that pestle? Any finger-marks?"

"Yes. But not Burgin's. *Nor* Miss Higgins's, you'll be disappointed to hear, I know, Colonel."

Now that was a tactless remark of Inspector Shadgold's. He divined as much from the stony gaze of Colonel Gore's monocle.

"Well, I shouldn't have used that word, perhaps, Colonel, but we've got to face the facts, haven't we? Either Burgin or Miss Higgins opened those safes with those keys. Either Burgin or Miss Higgins got them off the old man in the flat at Cornwall Place."

"Or both," suggested Lord.

"Couldn't have been both," snapped Shadgold. "The old man was killed round five. Miss Higgins was still at Stantons', we know, at half-past six or after."

"My good ass," said Gore, producing a box of cigars and touching a bell button, "if you ask Miss Herrick, she'll tell you that, instead of getting to Messrs. Stantons' about three o'clock as she has been doing for a week or so, Miss Higgins arrived there this afternoon a little after half-past five. Say it takes ten minutes for an active young woman to walk to Stantons' from Cornwall Place ——"

"That so?" retorted Inspector Shadgold, a little flatly. "I didn't know that."

"And here's another thing Miss Herrick told me. I got her to look up the blocks of her 'Order to view' book. When Mrs. Tanquered was on the lookout for a flat in Linwood first, in August, she had an order to view this flat in Cornwall Place among others. And she had the keys of the flat in her possession for four days."

Shadgold frowned over that, said, "That so?" again, and then, with a large, magnanimous gesture of a large hand, accepted a large drink and owned to complete perplexity. His colleague took the lead and another large drink.

"The fact of the matter is, Colonel, and we may as well

admit it, we're tied up in a knot over this business. Inspector Shadgold, of course, has his own ideas——"

"He hasn't," retorted Gore. "He has some of mine, and he can't do anything with them. And he's come here now to try to wangle some more of them out of me before he lets Miss Higgins leave that nursing-home."

The two professionals laughed whole-heartedly and without malice.

"Got it in one, Colonel," nodded Shadgold, settling himself in his chair at ease while his partner produced a notebook and a pencil unobtrusively. "Don't let that scare you. Nothing you say will be used against you."

"Your theory," said Lord, "I understand, is that Miss Higgins—she seems to me a nice, quiet young woman, though she isn't looking her best at the moment—your theory is that she killed young Philip Greston—killed her brother, Paul Brazil—tried to kill James Stanton—killed James Stanton—and in all probability has killed Burgin. It's some theory. But we're not arguing. We just want to know why you think why. Now, take young Greston first. Why did she kill him?"

Gore shook his head. "It can't be done that way. But I tell you what I will do. I'll give you a portrait of Miss Higgins as *I* see her—as large as life and nicely colored—if you'll let me have a look at the inside of two things—or rather three—those two cases of Mrs. Tanquered's, and that old tin box under the bed in Mr. Stanton's bedroom. How's that? By the way, have you had a look at them yourselves yet?"

"Well, no. As a matter of fact, I'm afraid we never thought of looking under Mr. Stanton's bed—as nothing seemed to have been disturbed in there. Nor in the cases—as they don't

seem to have been tampered with actually, though we know that Burgin handled one of them a bit."

"So much the better," said Gore. "We'll have a look at them together, then. Now, about Miss Higgins. You know who her mother was; her father was an Irishman, a Dr. Higgins, with a good practice in Port Elizabeth. She was born in 1900; that makes her twenty-eight now, twelve years younger than her stepbrother, Paul Brazil. She came to England eight years ago, was trained as a nurse at St. Waldo's, and was taken on the staff there. A most capable, steady girl, the matron told me today—never in the least flighty, very keen about her work, very popular—in every way satisfactory. She frequently talked about her brother in South Africa and had a photograph of him in her room. She had a very keen sense of humor, it appears; so keen that in all the time she was at the hospital none of the residents ever succeeded in getting up a flirtation with her, though most of them had a try at it.

"At the end of 1925 Miss Greston had a serious illness. Sir Peter Wilkins, who was called in—he's a St. Waldo's man, as you probably know—asked for the best nurse they had in the hospital. One with a winning personality and strong character was absolutely necessary, he said, for this particular case —and Miss Higgins was sent down to Wraxton Court.

"I had a talk with Mrs. Greston over the 'phone from London this afternoon. She told me that from the first her daughter took a violent fancy to Miss Higgins and, though she had been extremely difficult to deal with before, fell completely under her influence. Miss Higgins was treated as one of the family. Mrs. Greston herself thought—and still thinks —most highly of her in every way.

"When the question of a sea voyage for Miss Greston came up, she insisted upon going to South Africa. She had no

reason to give except that years before she had read *Jess*. But Miss Higgins supported her—and they went off together at the beginning of 1926. Three months later they came back—and Paul Brazil came with them. He married Miss Greston shortly after they landed in England—before any of her relatives had even seen him.

"Miss Greston at that time had very nearly ten thousand a year in her own right. Two lives stood then between her and another fifty or sixty thousand a year, the Wraxton estate and a big place in Scotland. Well—no one blames a man for marrying that—or a sister for helping him to do it—a sister with a winning personality and strong character.

"There are two points, however, to be kept in mind about this part of the story. Brazil married Miss Greston under a false name—and almost certainly she didn't know at that time that Miss Higgins was his sister. If they had let her know that, why should she—or they—have concealed it ever since from everyone else? I have some reason to believe that she found out; living together for two years in the same house with her, it's almost impossible that they shouldn't have made slips sometimes. But I don't believe they let her know it before she married—and if they didn't, it would have been difficult—and probably unwise—to let her know afterwards."

"In July the Tanquereds went to live at Chanton Mendip, and Miss Higgins, who had even accompanied Mrs. Tanquered on her honeymoon, went with them. In November of that year the boy Philip Greston died. . . .

"I asked Mrs. Greston today, by the way, if she often stayed with the Tanquereds. She said, only three times altogether in two years, although Tanquered and Miss Higgins were always begging her to go up to Danmore Lodge, because it did her daughter so much good to see her. As a matter of

fact, Mrs. Greston thought it did her daughter nothing of the sort, as they didn't hit it off. I asked her casually how she had liked the place—if she hadn't found it lonely at night. She said her own maid always slept in her room since her last illness. . . . I didn't say so to *her*—but I think it was probably fortunate for her that the maid did.

"But at any rate, Big Brother and Little Sister were one step nearer that other fifty thousand. Mrs. Greston's isn't a good life. In a few years she must go, in the ordinary course of things. Simon Chrisson was safely shut up in a lunatic asylum—anybody who still thought about it at all, thought that Philip Greston had been killed by him . . . or by no one. Everything in the garden ought to have seemed delightful.

"But I'm afraid that after a bit, it didn't. Big Brother and Little Sister, I'm afraid, fell out. And the end of the falling out was what happened to Big Brother at the Bower of Bliss.

"You'll say—Sister had gone to a lot of trouble to marry Brother to a rich wife. She had taken the biggest of risks to get him nearer to that fifty thousand. Is it credible that, having done all that for him, she could kill him—her brother?

"Well, it isn't—but she did it. I've an open mind as to his share in killing the child, but I expect he probably just kept out of the way and she did the job. I take it that, in practice, it was the winning personality and the strong character that persuaded Mrs. Tanquered into signing checks payable to Brother. At any rate, I'm sure that that was so once Mr. Boyne appeared on the tapis. Now, if Brother got dissatisfied with results and made a fuss—and if he was able to say that if they didn't improve and if Mr. Boyne wasn't warned off the course, he knew a reason why Sister should pay closer attention to their common interests—Sister might begin to see

that Big Brother might become rather a nuisance. If there was a domestic smash-up ahead, Mr. Boyne was clearly the person to keep on terms with. Big Brother's use was gone—and he was dangerous. So she got rid of him as soon as she got the chance.

"It *was,* of course, the merest chance that she killed him—and tried to kill Mr. Stanton—that night at the inn. Both of them stayed at the inn that night by accident. She can have foreseen nothing—had no more idea, when she arrived there with Mrs. Tanquered, of killing either of them than she had of killing Boyne or myself. But she got the chance—and she took it.

"You say—too simple. No intelligent human being—and Miss Higgins, I agree, is a highly intelligent one—even if he or she were capable of desiring to do such a thing, could have had the folly to attempt to carry it into execution. The simplicity of the thing is childish. Two people whom she disliked, or feared, or who were in some way inconvenient to her comfort alive, were there, sleeping in the same house with her. She wished that they were dead—it's pretty certain, in my opinion, that in Mr. Stanton's case, at any rate, she had been wishing that for some months back. She imagined them dead—and she killed them. It's a common thing to find that a woman who desires to attain to some object very strongly is capable of shutting her eyes to all intervening difficulties and risks. I rather think that Miss Higgins has this little idiosyncrasy very highly developed—abnormally developed. The curious thing is that in this case, as usual with the safety last method, the difficulties and dangers faded out absolutely and everything was as easy as winking.

"I expect that early in the evening she found out—probably from young Stanton—that he and his father intended to

stay the night at the Bower of Bliss. If he happened to mention to her that the old man was going a bit strong with the whisky bottle, that may have started her thinking in a certain direction. When she saw that bottle of chloroform in Waudby's case, she probably imagined the job done and Mr. Stanton nice and dead.

"She saw him going to bed more than half-screwed. She knew where his room was—only a little way from Boyne's room—and by itself at the end of the corridor or passage. Some time between 11:30 and 2:30, she went along to that room, found him sleeping like a log, gave him a whiff of chloroform on a handkerchief, probably, and then, as she believed, suffocated him. I wonder if you've noticed her hands. They're rather interesting. She opened the window, expecting the strong wind to blow out the smell of the stuff, and left the door ajar.

"By the way—as regards the details of her method, it's interesting to note that she kept to the same dodge in all four cases—certainly in three of them. The mouth was kept shut by pressing the chin up from beneath with one hand, while the other blocked the nostrils. I should rather like to know where she got that tip from.

"After that, she went downstairs. Why? That brings us to Mrs. Tanquered. I don't suppose Boyne can tell us anything. But Mrs. Tanquered was left alone while this was happening. She has stated, I think, that she and Miss Higgins fell asleep about half-past twelve, and slept until I woke them about three. Or did she state that?"

"Miss Higgins stated it," replied Shadgold. "Mrs. Tanquered said she fell asleep some time or other, but she couldn't say when, nor when she woke up."

"Very probably had a whiff of that handkerchief," suggested Lord.

"Very probably," Gore agreed. "Well, for some reason Miss Higgins went downstairs then. She may have heard a noise down there—or she may have known or guessed that she would find Tanquered blind drunk in the sitting-room. If young Stanton told her that Tanquered (I'll call him that for the moment) had been taking brandy bottles from the tap, well, we know that *she* knew what happened when he started on brandy. Or she may have gone down simply to get a rug from Mrs. Tanquered's car. There's Burgin to think about, of course, but we'll leave Burgin aside for the moment. She went downstairs, and for some reason went into the sitting-room. There she found Tanquered—on the floor—with his head cut open—unconscious. Her chance had come, and she took it.

"Who bashed him on the head with that bottle? Simon Chrisson, I think, without the slightest doubt. When he climbed out of the tap by that window, he took the bottle his brother had nearly finished with him, and no doubt finished it. He got back into the house later on, and came on Tanquered, probably asleep by the fire—those candles were still burning then, I expect—and broke the bottle on his head. I suppose he got scared then, and had some idea of getting away in a car, so he pinched mine, and went off in it. I don't think he had anything to do with Mrs. Tanquered's car.

"After that, Sister got into the two-seater and went up to Danmore Lodge—left the car in a field—got into the house quietly—changed the clothes that had got messed up handling Brother (there was a good deal of blood about, and, even if he wasn't conscious, I expect it wasn't easy to finish him off. His face looked as if he'd made some sort of fight for it),

went back to the inn, found everything all right there and Mrs. Tanquered still safely asleep, made herself comfortable, and quite probably went to sleep.

"Now, I've left out Burgin—and those diamonds Brother carried round in his belt—probably large stones, though you may take it that there was a knapsack full of them originally, big and small. My belief is that Sister emptied that belt, except for three stones, and then had the bright idea of planting it on Luke Chrisson—found an old coat of his hanging up near the kitchen, and stuck the belt into its pocket. Quite a bright idea . . . as Inspector Shadgold, I'm sure, will agree."

"I'm not arguing now, Colonel," smiled Shadgold, a little ruefully. "So you think she has those diamonds?"

"Not at the moment. I may be quite wrong. But my idea is that they're in one of those two cases in the safe at Stantons'—the one she *didn't* open to show Henry Stanton. That, I think, explains Burgin. I haven't thought of any other idea that does, so far.

"Now, let us consider Mr. Burgin carefully. Mr. Burgin is no killer. That sort of thing isn't in his line at all. We know what his connection with Brazil was—and we know what he is really interested in—diamonds and things like that. He went down to Chanton Mendip to talk to Brazil about diamonds—probably to induce Brazil to intrust him with another little commission. He and Brazil talked diamonds that night, when Cowlishaw went to bed. Whether he knew about the belt or not—then—doesn't really matter. But I expect Brazil merely showed him a single stone—the one that was found in his hand.

"Now, *he* knew, for certain, that Brazil was full of brandy when he left him and went up to bed. What I suppose is that it occurred to him some time after he went upstairs that

Brazil's pockets might be worth investigating. Or, of course, possibly he knew about the belt and what was in it. I think that he left his room and went downstairs and caught Sister in the act—or at any rate in or near the sitting-room—quite possibly emptying the belt. More probably emptying the belt. On the whole, I think it's unlikely that he thought she had killed Brazil. No doubt she faked up some story . . . and he may have believed that the 'loonies,' as he called them, had got into the house again and attacked Brazil. But some sort of arrangement or agreement must have been arrived at between them, either then or when she came back from Danmore Lodge. Otherwise he would certainly have raised the alarm there and then.

"He didn't. He went back to his room. And there, I think, his nerve failed him. The last thing a gentleman of his kidney would wish would be to be brought in contact with the police—and the only way to avoid that was to clear out. So he cleared out. I caught him, in fact, on the point of doing it—and, I regret to say, helped him to do it.

"Where did he go? I don't mind betting that some time within twenty-four hours he was snug as a bug in Mrs. Tanquered's empty flat here in Linwood, and that he's been there ever since. At any rate, if you know a better hole, I'm open to conviction.

"What kept him there? Diamonds—and Miss Higgins's winning personality. Miss Higgins, I think, had developed a couple of new ideas in a hurry—for some reason, she's been in a quite remarkable hurry lately. I hate to say so, but I suspect since I appeared upon the scene. Rather, I should say, she had gone back to one old idea and thought of a happy plan for combining it with a new one.

"The old one was about Mr. Stanton. She had had that as

far back as August, I think. The idea was to get Mr. Stanton to some nice quiet place—a nice quiet flat in a nice quiet road. Once the flat was selected, the rest was easy. Persuade Mrs. Tanquered, who was looking for a flat then (no doubt that was the genesis of the idea), to get an order to view the flat selected, *and* the keys. A very simple matter to have a duplicate of the door-key made . . . a matter of a day. When the keys had been duly returned to Messrs. Stanton, a very simple matter, when discussing it with Miss Herrick in the office, or with young Mr. Stanton—to discover the name of some other flat-seeker, who had recently viewed this particular one and decided against it. When everything was ready, very simple to make an appointment with Mr. James Stanton in the other flat-seeker's name. Mr. Stanton would arrive at the flat—and finding no one awaiting his coming, would naturally open the door of the flat, and go in—to wait.

"Perfectly simple. Of course a suitable flat must be selected. As a matter of fact, as I suppose you both noticed, the flat in Cornwall Place was delightfully suitable—front garden shut in on both sides by trees; upper flat empty—empty for nearly two years, like the ground-floor one, Miss Herrick tells me; quiet road; no street-lamp near the gate—everything most desirable and convenient.

"The new idea was quite an excellent one, also, and also quite simple. If Mr. Stanton was killed, some one must kill him. Who more suitable than Burgin—Burgin who knew much too much about that night at the Bower of Bliss? All that was necessary was to get Burgin into Mr. Stanton's rooms at night—and leave him there for some one of intelligence to find—nicely posed before Mr. Stanton's open safes. A difficult thing to manage, you say? Not in the least . . . for Miss Higgins.

"I expect the first idea in placing the diamonds in one of Mrs. Tanquered's cases and lodging them with Stantons' would be to get them into a safe place where no one—Burgin or anyone else—would think for a moment of looking for them. But this idea was improved on, I think, by telling Burgin that the diamonds were there. It's safe to believe that the main object of his existence since that night has been to get hold of at least half the plunder. Somehow along that line, I think, he was induced to go to Stantons' last evening. She let him in, of course,—never left the building. All this business of repacking Mrs. Tanquered's cases, I feel sure, has been preparation—a means of making herself familiar with the ropes of the establishment and its geography. In point of fact, she had a sort of dress rehearsal last night. I had a man watching Stantons'. She was in there until after eleven o'clock at night. If I hadn't been convinced that Mr. Stanton wouldn't have simply laughed at me, I should have told him so this morning before I went up to London. But—I was—and I didn't.

"She had had the duplicate key of the flat in Cornwall Place since August. The present tenants hadn't succeeded yet in finding anyone to sublet to. All that was necessary, to bring the idea up to date, was to find out the name of some one who had been after the flat recently and turned it down.

"She was in the flat waiting when Mr. Stanton arrived. Had to be. He expected to find Mrs. Lockett waiting for him—outside. That practically proves that she had a key. And that's my theory as to how she got it. By the way, Miss Herrick says that it was Miss Higgins who conducted the negotiations when Mrs. Tanquered was first looking for a flat. We can imagine, possibly, why Messrs. Stanton were selected to deal with.

"Well, when she had finished at Cornwall Place, she got to Stantons' as quickly as she could get. Young Stanton left her working away at the cases at half-past six. But Miss Herrick tells me that she knew that Miss Higgins was staying late. Probably, then, she made no move until about eight o'clock. (Miss Herrick I should say was right in thinking she heard keys fall—Mr. Stanton's bunch of keys.) She let Burgin in when she thought it was all safe—the business had to be polished off before the night watchman arrived at nine—and they went upstairs. What they intended to do about the old housekeeper, if she hadn't happened to have gone out, we can keep on wondering. They went into Mr. Stanton's room and opened the big safes first—because Miss Higgins expected to find Mrs. Tanquered's cases in one of them. Then they opened the small safe. Burgin stooped forward, with his head and shoulders in the safe, to take the cases out, and she jabbed him twice with the knife from behind. He probably collapsed. There wasn't any time to waste. She began to look for what she wanted.

"This is the part of the story that I can't tell you. What did she look for? If we can find that out, we shall probably find out why she took such pains about old Stanton. It looks as if it was a document of some sort. She took every scrap of paper she could find in the safes out of them and chucked it on the floor. She didn't find what she was looking for, that's pretty certain, I think.

"By the way, the old man kept private papers in the small safe. The cases were in one of the bigger safes to start with, we know, and he changed them over to the small one. So the private papers may have gone somewhere else. I had a look round, but the only likely place I could find was that

tin box under his bed. The papers on the floor were all connected with his literary work, as far as I could see.

"At any rate she looked for something. Burgin must have come to a bit and gone for her. You know that he was a professional puncher once. I expect she had a pretty rough time far a little bit. But he couldn't have lasted out long—probably knocked her out, and collapsed finally himself. And that, I think, is as far as I've got at present."

"And you call that a portrait, Colonel?" commented Inspector Lord. "What's the label underneath? Homicidal maniac?"

Gore shook his head. "No, no. Some screws loose, of course—but we all have. No, I'm quite sure this young woman always thinks she has an excellent reason for doing anything she does. But it whacks me to imagine why she wanted to kill old Stanton. Something to do with that transfer of the business, perhaps . . ."

He looked at his watch. "Midnight precisely, gentlemen. In five minutes from now my beauty sleep will begin. Another little one? No? Well, many thanks for being so nice to me. By the way, I should put the screw on young Henry a bit, I think. Young Henry saw something that night at the Bower of Bliss that made him nervous. Meet you tomorrow morning at Stantons'—say, at ten? Good night."

Inspector Shadgold and Inspector Lord picked up a taxi just outside the hotel and got into it.

"Ingenious, anyhow," said Lord. "Too ingenious."

"No use to us," said Shadgold. "It's an obsession—that's what it is. Worst of it is—hearing it the way *he* put it—well, it grows on you. But, damn it—a girl with eyes like those *couldn't* do it, Lord—couldn't."

"Well, what are we going to do?"

Inspector Shadgold's was a loyal heart. But after some moments of silence he replied: "Better make sure, Lord. We'll put a couple of men on at the Home for the night, eh?"

CHAPTER XX

Messrs. Stantons' premises were closed and lugubrious with the shutters of mourning when Gore arrived there at ten o'clock next morning, but in the lower office Mr. Henry, paler and more nervous than ever, was waiting, with Shadgold and Lord for his coming.

His first inquiry was for Burgin. But whatever Burgin could have told was to remain untold for ever; he had died early that morning without speaking.

"We got the keys of Mrs. Tanquered's flat from Miss Higgins," said Shadgold, "and we've just been over it. It's all ready, I suppose for Mrs. Tanquered's coming—beds made up and all that. No sign of any second person having lived there that we could see, though the people in the top flat (there are only two flats in the house; Mrs. Tanquered's is a maisonette—two floors) they say they've heard no voices nor seen anyone but Miss Higgins go in and out during the past couple of weeks. Only thing we found that *might* mean anything was a used safety-razor blade in the bathroom wash-up. But, of course, lots of ladies use safety razors nowadays."

"Fi-fi, Inspector," reproved Gore. "Now, look here. When Burgin left the Bower of Bliss that night, he had a small case—one of those little cases children take their dinners to school in, you know. I wonder where that's got to. Had a look round in that storeroom where Mrs. Tanquered's stuff is?"

Leaving Mr. Henry in the office, the other three made their

way to the place where the two boxes of books upon which Miss Higgins had last been working still stood open and partially unpacked. They lighted a gas-jet and entered the storeroom immediately behind the cases. Resting on a dusty cake-table they saw a small leather case and a pipe. In the case, which Shadgold forced open, they found masculine hair-brushes and comb, toothbrush and tooth paste, a bottle of hair cream, and a dozen soft collars, ten of which had been worn, none of which had ever been laundered since their purchase. A thirteenth collar, also worn, had seen some service and had been bought at an outfitter's in Oxford Street; the other twelve had been sold by a Westmouth firm. The last item of the case's contents was a safety razor.

"Brand new," Gore pointed out, drily. "Three unused blades still in the wrappers—one blade in the razor—that's four. Those blades are sold in packets of five for two-and-thruppence. I wonder where the fifth one has got to. What about that blade you found? Not a 'Valet,' was it, by any chance?"

"It is," nodded Lord. "Well, we've got to find out who bought those collars straightway. But we'll have a look at those cases first. Miss Higgins handed over the keys without a murmur."

Accompanied this time by Mr. Henry, they ascended to the silent rooms upstairs. The small safe was opened and the cases taken out carefully and unlocked. Inspector Shadgold could not restrain a smile. Both contained gold plate, each article fitted neatly into its allotted place in the velvet lining —and nothing more.

"Of course," he allowed with consoling magnanimity, "that doesn't prevent Burgin having *thought* he was going to find the diamonds in them—if she spun him the yarn you think

she did. Still . . . Thank you, Mr. Stanton. We've done with these for the moment. Now we'd like to look at a tin box Colonel Gore tells us he saw under your father's bed."

With fumbling fingers Mr. Henry found on the bunch which Shadgold handed him the key which opened the ancient dispatch-box discovered beneath the bed in the adjoining room. Shadgold took out its contents one by one and laid them on the counterpane: several bundles of letters; a water-color drawing of Mr. Henry's mother; a volume of Tennyson's poems; a number of faded photographs; a stained little cardboard box containing a piece of wedding cake; and then a large cartridge envelope, sealed and marked: "Confidential. To be destroyed by my son Henry after my death, unread." He was proceeding with his task when a remark from Gore, who had picked up the envelope from the bed, stopped him.

"This ink is quite fresh. He wrote this within the last few days."

Lord agreed. "I'm afraid we must open this envelope, Mr. Stanton."

In spite of Mr. Henry's vehement opposition, and Shadgold's doubts of the necessity to disregard the injunction of the dead man, Lord slit the envelope open, withdrew its contents—two documents pinned together—and perused them before handing them in silence to his colleague. Shadgold, too, passed them on in silence to Gore, when he had read them, and, having lighted a cigarette, waited for his comments.

Both were in the same neat handwriting, on blue foolscap paper, the body of each document written apparently, to judge from his signature appended as witness to the second, by William Stanton. The actual signature to the first, however, was that of Harold Stanton; to the second, the mark of Theresa Stanton.

The first was brief, with a smack of amateur legality in its wording.

I, Harold Begley Stanton, of City Meads St., Westmouth, hereby agree of my own free will on this first day of January 1889, to surrender to William Stanton all and any interest of any kind whatsoever in the business carried on as Messrs. Stanton & Son at the above place, and to undertake that at no time in the future will any claim or demand of any kind whatsoever be made by me or by any person acting for me or in my behalf upon the profits or stock or other property whatsoever of the aforesaid business and premises. And I hereby affirm solemnly that I do this in the belief and conviction of my own mind and conscience that the aforesaid William Stanton is the rightful owner of the said business, which belief is founded upon the statement made in writing by my mother, Theresa Stanton, on this date, and in my presence, and attached hereto, she being in her right mind and in possession of all her faculties though at the point of death and about to face her Maker.

And in consideration of my financial state but not as a matter of right or upon any claim by way of legal consideration I hereby agree to accept from the aforesaid William Stanton the sum of five hundred pounds and from my mother Theresa Stanton a like sum of five hundred pounds, the first to be paid on this date and the second upon my mother's decease if she should die within twelve months but if not on the first day of January 1890.

(signed) Harold Begley Stanton.

Witnesses (signed) Thomas Ducker, accountant.

(signed) William Holsworthy, clerk.

The second document, much longer, bore at its head a note in William Stanton's neat hand.

Taken down by me from my mother's dictation in presence of witnesses whose signatures are attached and read over in their presence before signature W. S. 1/1/89.

The substance of the document was as follows, the crude directness of its phrasing presenting its narrative with arresting vividness.

My name before I married Jacob Stanton was Theresa Moult. My father was gamekeeper to Colonel Warton of Frickley Hall near Doncaster and I was linen-maid at the house when I married and no more than sixteen. Jacob Stanton was a travelling showman and well known in the north country. He came twice to Doncaster with his show before the third time when he persuaded me to go away with him. He married me at Durham as he promised when the first child was born where it died of a fit. He worked with his show from Sheffield where he came from up to Scotland and down again and did very good business wherever we stopped. He was a good man and kind to me, except when in drink. We had monkeys and a bear as well as horses and dogs and fifteen people to pay. There were twelve vans and the bear's cage. The monkeys had a cage, too, but sometimes some of them travelled in the vans. We acted plays also which Jacob Stanton made up himself and was very clever at painting the scenes. We were together for three years and had no quarrel, though he was old, and no one ever came between us until John Perry joined us. And a bad day it was when he did.

At Christmas of the year '28 my second child William[1] was born at Carlisle. I lay ill for a long time after and it was in February when we went on the road again. It was at Lancaster John Perry first came to us. A bit outside the town we saw him sitting beside the road mending his boots, and he came to our van and asked my husband if he could give him employment. He said he was starving and there wasn't a stitch of him that wasn't in rags. He said he was used to horses, having been a soldier in the Hussars and had been all over the world and could turn his hand to anything, which we found afterwards was the truth. He was a queer, gay fellow, laughing at everything,

[1] This was William, father of James Stanton.

though he was weak with hunger, and making us laugh with him. My husband took a great fancy for him, and the next day he put him to help with the horses, never knowing what was to come of it.

"After a bit my husband found Perry was clever at clowning and playacting and he was the best clown we ever had. He used to help my husband making up the plays we acted and before we started out from Sheffield again in the summer of that year, they made up a play about the Edinburgh murders that everyone had been talking of when I lay up at Carlisle. My husband acted Burke and Perry acted Hare and I acted Mary Paterson. And we had an idiot boy was Daft Jamie and acted it very well. This play went very well, especially up near Scotland. But when we came to Carlisle again the magistrates stopped us doing it and we had to leave the town, because Perry was drunk the first night and nigh finished Daft Jamie in earnest, and the people tore down the tent. After that my husband would never have this play acted again and there was a quarrel between him and Perry over it. But they made it up afterwards, because Perry had his own object in his mind as I found out.

"Before what I've told you happened at Carlisle he had taken advantage of me, and when I knew I was to have a child by him he began to put ideas into my head about my husband. He said he was an old man and lazy and not able to manage the show to make the money that could be made out of it, and that he knew an easy way to rid me of him safely. It was a long time before he dared put it to me openly, and when he did and I saw what he would be at, I threatened to tell my husband who would deal with him. But he got round me with his ways and threats and I said nothing. But God will judge me that I believed it was his mad talk only and never would attempt so great a villainy.

"It was at York he done it. One night when he and my husband were drinking together in the van, they fought because Perry teased a monkey my husband had in the van and was fond of and often had it sleeping in the bed with us against my

wish. My time was near then and I was sitting on the bed trying to quiet them. Perry pushed my husband off his stool on to the floor and fell on top of him, and I guessed then what he had in his mind, to kill him before my eyes the way was done in the play he made up, by choking the breath of him. He squeezed his nose with one hand, and closed up his mouth with the other, lying on top of him to keep him down on the floor, which he did easily, my husband being a small man and not near so strong as Perry. I said to him, "What you villain, would you murder the man?" and tried to pull him off. But he kicked me in the belly with his feet and I fell in a swoon on the floor beside them. When I come to myself again a little, my husband was on the bed with the monkey lying on his face and Perry holding it there and it stayed there quiet enough. The fright of it struck me with my pains and I screamed out. He caught me by the throat and threatened to serve me the same if I didn't hold my whisht, which was an Irish word he used like many, and I always had my doubts he was an Irishman, though he said he came from Wales. In the end, through fear of my life, I agreed to what he asked of me, and he left the van and I called out and the people came in and found the monkey lying on my husband's face and him dead, and I told them I had woke up and found him so. There was none of them doubted I told the truth and they killed the monkey. And Perry was in a great rage about this and beat the two men that did it. My child was born dead that night, and they buried it in the same grave with Jacob, my husband.

After a while we went on the road again, Perry having got rid of all our old people and engaged new ones. And we worked down south after that, and made more money than ever before, but Perry was always saying there were ways of making money more easily and in comfort. There was six thousand pounds of my husband's in Willway's Bank in Sheffield when he died, and the year after, when we were at Westmouth, Perry said to me he had a good offer for the show and the good will, and we

should sell it, and go into the furniture-dealing business with the capital we had, as he knew a man with a good business of that sort to sell cheap in the city. I was unwilling to do this, but when he was in one of his mad rages he was a wicked devil and I was always afraid he would keep to his promise he made so often and serve me the same in my sleep as he did my husband, so in the end I gave way to him. The business was in City Meads Street in Westmouth and a small one, but after two years Perry took in the shop next door and increased the stock and in the third year we had more than a thousand pounds of profits. After my husband's death he had taken to using the name Stanton instead of his own, as the old name of the show was still used, and he said as everyone called him Stanton he would use the name. When my child Harold was born by him, two years after my husband's death, he was christened Harold Stanton. Perry often asked me to marry him. But I never would and many times thought of how I could leave him without his finding out where I went. But he was always watching me, whatever I did or wherever I went.

When my child William was nine years of age and Harold seven, one day before the Easter of '38, when Perry was out a woman came to the shop saying she was Perry's wife and making a great drunken noise before the customers, so that I took her upstairs to be out of the way. She told me then that Perry's real name was Hare and that he was the Edinburgh murderer that turned king's evidence and that she had searched for him ever since but had never been able to find him until, coming from Ireland, she had landed at Westmouth Docks and seen the very man on the quay helping to load a wagon with timber from a ship. Perry came in while she was there and was in a terrible rage, and said she was a lying Irish trollop and that he would have her committed to the gaol. She went away and he followed her out, and, having seen that there was something between them, and that he knew her and feared her threats, it came into my mind that her story was the truth, knowing the villain he

had been to my husband and the manner in which he had murdered him. I took what money was in the till of the shop and went away to Bath by the midday coach, and from there set out to Doncaster, where I came in ten days and found my mother dead but my father still alive. I stayed in his house awhile and then, having my mind made up to leave the country, I persuaded from him twelve pounds and went to Hull, where I sailed from on the 1st of August in the *Baltimore* barque bound for New Orleans, giving my name on the agent's list as Moult, my maiden name.

Here followed an account of Theresa Stanton's life in a new world in which, apparently, she had prospered, married again, and lived in uneventful comfort as the wife and widow of a Virginian farmer for forty-eight years. She was, by her own statement, seventy-six years of age when, in 1886, the desire came to her to return to England.

There she found her two sons, William and Harold, alive, the former now a man of fifty-seven, the latter a couple of years younger. But between the present fortunes of the two brothers she found a marked discrepancy. The younger, her son Harold by John Perry, was the head and sole partner of the prosperous business—still in City Meads Street in Westmouth, which his father had left to him on his death; the elder, her child by her husband, Jacob Stanton, was an ill-paid clerk at a tannery in the same city. Theresa Stanton took up her residence with her younger son. But—against the wishes of the wealthy and respected Harold—she became a frequent visitor at his brother's humble house and made no concealment of her preference for him. Harold having refused to permit William to visit her beneath his roof, apparently through jealousy of this preference and unwillingness to associate with his impoverished and unsuccessful brother,

their mother came definitely to a decision which, it seems, she had revolved in her mind since this curious reunion. Her narrative proceeded:

From that day it has been my solemn desire and intention that, in so far as lay in my power, justice should be done to the lawful child of my husband, Jacob Stanton, before I died. And to this end I have now made this statement and I swear now on the Holy Book that what I have said is the truth, that John Perry was never married to me; that the money with which he set up in business in Westmouth was the money my husband had in the bank in Sheffield; that John Perry had not a halfpenny of his own when my husband took him off the roadside in rags, nor ever had, except the wages my husband paid him, until after he murdered him as I have told; and that in justice and by right whatever profits have been made by the use of that money are lawfully due to my son William and are wrongfully held by my son Harold, though in innocence of his father's villainy. And I pray that God may forgive me and prosper both my children and their children after them.

THERESA MOULT

X her mark.

Witnessed; HAROLD STANTON, City Meads St., Westmouth.
MARTHA LLOYD " " "
WILLIAM STANTON " " "
JAMES STANTON " " "
PAULINE STANTON " " "
HERBERT BRAZIL " " "
LOUISA CRAMER " " "

Gore handed the two documents back to Inspector Lord. "Very interesting," he said, musingly. "So that's what she was after."

"Well," demanded Inspector Shadgold of an unhelpful world, after a frowning perusal of that family tree with which

Gore had presented him "what the juice has it to do with anything. 1828? That's a bit before my time, Colonel. What the juice were the Edinburgh ——?"

He paused. Gore had picked up the little leather case, opened it, and spread its contents on the counterpane of the bed.

"Have you ever seen any of these things before, Mr. Stanton?" he asked.

CHAPTER XXI

"We have listened, gentlemen," said the eminent counsel for the defense, "to the apocryphal story of Professor Cowlishaw and his ditch of diamonds. Professor Cowlishaw has some claim to the title of scientist and at all events occupies a responsible position on the staff of a well-known scientific institution. If we have entertained doubts while we listened to what seemed a story from the *Arabian Nights,* we stifled them in the hope and belief that in due course satisfactory and credible evidence would be forthcoming to corroborate at least some of the details of that story. But, gentlemen, none has been forthcoming—not even a glimpse of the tragic knapsack which he so heroically emptied of provisions in the desert—heroically, since it was done to carry away a couple of million—or three million, it does not really matter which—pounds worth of loot from his Golconda. He has stated that he has heard that diamonds in enormous quantities have been found—he suggests in his very ditch—in Greater Namaqualand. But you will ask yourselves whether in fact his ditch ever had any existence, even in that powerful imagination of his, until he had heard of these discoveries.

"Nor has any smallest particle of evidence been adduced, beyond his own statement, to prove that before the night of November 27th last year he had ever seen or even heard of Louis Tanquered—or, as the prosecution aver, Paul Brazil. Nor have we the slightest corroboration of his statements with regard to Burgin's nocturnal activities or his own exercises in amateur detection. Gentlemen, I think we have all

reached the same conclusion concerning Professor Cowlishaw, that he has mistaken his vocation and that his true *métier* is that of a manufacturer of thrillers.

"But if his story is true, what then? May it not reasonably be asked with what motive he went down that day to Chanton Mendip—what kept him until half-past eleven o'clock that night in conversation with Tanquered and Burgin? Gentlemen, it is no part of your present duty to find another victim to place in the dock in room of its present unhappy occupant. But you must view with at least the utmost caution and circumspection the evidence given by this witness—evidence admittedly withheld from the police until fear of the consequences elicited it.

"Is there any more support—if less suspicion, at least of the most sinister kind—for the story which Henry Stanton tells us. For him each and all of you will feel the sympathy due to a man who has lost his father under such terrible circumstances. But this is a matter, not of feeling or emotion, but of the sternest justice. And you will be on your guard, I feel, against the instinct which lies in every human breast that has suffered injury or loss, the desire for revenge. Nor will you forget that, if his story is true, he finds himself now in the humiliating and terrible position of having to admit that he was used as a tool to compass his father's destruction. You will be on your guard, gentlemen, against the natural but dangerous resentment which looks for means to console an injured self-respect and a humiliated vanity.

"What does Henry Stanton tell us?

"That on the night of November 27th—or rather in the morning of November 28th last—at or about half-past one in the morning, it occurred to him that he might be of assistance to Mrs. Tanquered and Miss Higgins. What assistance?

He is unable to explain. That he got out of his bed and went along the cross passage where his bedroom was, into the main passage of the upstairs floor of the inn, where was the bedroom in which the two ladies had been attending to Mr. Boyne and watching over him in his unconscious condition. That he knocked at the door of that room and then, receiving no response, opened it and looked in and saw Mrs. Tanquered there, alone save for Mr. Boyne, lying head downwards across a chair beside Mr. Boyne's bed. That he went into the room, raised her up a little and propped her against the end of the bed, but could not arouse her, owing to her being, as he judged, in a faint. That he recalls detecting in the room a smell which he now believes to have been that of chloroform, and that this smell was especially strong on the fur coat which Mrs. Tanquered was wearing. That the window of the room was wide open and that he noticed this because the wind was making the candles gutter. That believing Miss Higgins must have gone downstairs to obtain the assistance of Mrs. Tanquered's husband, he went down the stairs. That he was wearing neither boots nor shoes, but simply his socks. That when he was halfway down the stairs he saw Burgin and Miss Higgins come out of the sitting-room—the room on the right-hand of the entrance passage as you go in by the front door of the inn, in which Louis Tanquered was found dead about an hour later. That upon seeing him they appeared confused and alarmed, and asked him what he wanted, both speaking together. That he replied that he wanted nothing—though, he says, he had just left Mrs. Tanquered lying senseless upstairs, and had gone downstairs with the express purpose of finding her husband and Miss Higgins and sending them at once to her assistance, and that he turned and went back to his bedroom, and got

into bed again. That almost immediately, however, he heard footsteps before the inn and got out of bed again to look out of his window. We have been told by several witnesses that that was a pitch-black night, but he says that he saw Miss Higgins get into Mrs. Tanquered's car and drive away in it. That almost immediately after that he heard footsteps creeping along the cross-passage and heard the door of Burgin's room—which was opposite his—being closed softly. That about half an hour later he heard the car return to the inn. That a few minutes after that Miss Higgins came into his room and told him that Mrs. Tanquered had had a fainting fit, a thing to which she was subject, and that she, Miss Higgins, had gone up to the house—that is, to Danmore Lodge—to fetch the tabloids which Mrs. Tanquered took when these attacks came on. That she then asked him to say nothing of having found her talking to Burgin at that hour of the night. That she said Burgin was always pestering her with his attentions and had followed her downstairs. That to escape from him she had gone into the sitting-room and seen Mr. Tanquered lying there on the floor, bleeding from the head, and that she feared something had happened him. That she asked him, Henry Stanton, however, to say nothing to anyone of having seen her about the inn or of her having gone up to Danmore Lodge, as if Chrisson had injured Mr. Tanquered, the police would be called in, and that she was terrified of being mixed up in anything of that sort. That he promised to say nothing. That although he had heard that there was a man lying downstairs bleeding and alone, he did not go down to render him assistance, but remained in his bedrom until, shortly before three o'clock, Colonel Gore came and told him that his father was unwell. That when subsequently he learned that Louis Tanquered

had been murdered, he did not inform the police or anyone else of what he had seen and heard during the night.

"Why? Because, gentlemen, Miss Higgins had requested him to spare her the unpleasantness of being mixed up with the police ——

"Now, is this a credible explanation of his extraordinary silence, gentlemen? Is it conceivable that any intelligent human having seen, under such circumstances, two people come out of the room in which an hour afterwards a man was found murdered, would have kept silence because one of these two people asked him to spare her the unpleasantness of being brought in contact with the police? Why should he comply with that request? What claim had the prisoner upon his consideration? What power had she to induce him to make a false statement to the police? And, even if, as he has told us, no suspicion ever entered his head that the prisoner had had any hand either in Tanquered's death or in the mysterious attack upon his own father, can he say that this was true concerning Burgin also—the second person whom he had seen come out of the sitting-room? He knew that Burgin had fled away from the inn in the most suspicious manner, and that the police were looking for him. He must have known that the gravest suspicion attached to Burgin. And yet—because the prisoner disliked having anything to do with the police—he kept absolute silence for weeks as to what he knew of Burgin's movements during that night. Gentlemen, you will form your own conclusions as to his story and his explanations.

"Considerable stress has been laid upon the fact that he purchased at various dates following the murder of Louis Tanquered—as, he states, at the prisoner's request—a number of articles—brushes and collars and so on—which were found,

again providentially, in a leather case said to have belonged to Burgin. But he admits that, Miss Higgins having happened to mention that she had to purchase some such articles —things for men's use—for a new chauffeur whom she had just engaged for Mrs. Tanquered, he volunteered to purchase them for her. He can suggest no reason why, if he had not so volunteered, the prisoner should have selected him to make these purchases, which she could quite easily have made herself. And if it is suggested that, for her own guilty purposes, she did not herself wish to make these purchases—intended, as the prosecution avers, for the use of Burgin, then in concealment at Mrs. Tanquered's flat in Linwood—is it conceivable that she would have ventured to intrust Henry Stanton—a comparative stranger, a person known only through some business transactions with his father—with their purchase? He himself can give us no reason why she should have done so—why she should have employed him as an accomplice to conceal her other accomplice—as an accessory after the fact to one horrible crime—before the fact to one still more horrible. Again, listening to his unwilling and unsatisfactory replies, you must have asked yourselves if even now he has told the whole truth of his relations—or contemplated relations—with the prisoner.

"But, gentlemen, the collars and the brushes are absolutely beside the point. There is not a particle of evidence to show that the leather case found so conveniently in one of Messrs. Stantons' storerooms—a case exactly similar in appearance and material to thousands of such cases in use in this city alone—ever belonged to or was ever in the possession of Burgin. Colonel Gore, whose accuracy and conscientiousness in giving his evidence is to be commended—himself admits that he cannot identify this case with that which he says he saw

in Burgin's hand when he left the inn. He will not say more than that it is a similar case, to the best of his recollection. And you have heard Albert Parkes, the chauffeur whom the prisoner did actually engage for Mrs. Tanquered on December 1st, state that at the time of his engagement he was promised new collars and brushes and a safety razor, as the prisoner told him that he would be required to keep himself smart and clean, even when not in livery, but that he never received these articles, the engagement having been canceled by letter because Mrs. Tanquered was not satisfied with his references.

"We have heard something, too, of a Valet safety-razor blade—a blade of which probably millions are in use in this country every morning. It is sought to prove that, because such a blade was found in Mrs. Tanquered's flat, Burgin used it while he was in hiding there, and that it is the fifth blade of the packet found in the leather case. Gentlemen, you will assess at its proper value this attempt to introduce the puerile ingenuities of popular fiction into a case of this dreadful gravity.

"But worse lies before us. We come now to the *pièce de résistance* of the prosecution—the famous declaration of Theresa Stanton—a declaration purporting to be made on January 1st, 1889, and on oath, at the point of death. For no attribute which can lend to it solemnity is lacking.

"Theresa Stanton is dead; of the seven witnesses whose signatures purport to be appended to this remarkable document, not one is now, unfortunately, living. Of the existence of this document, until, by extraordinary good fortune, it was discovered by the police in a tin box beneath Mr. James Stanton's bed two days after his death, no person can be shown to have had any faintest knowledge whatever. But,

by a providential chance, unparalleled in legal history, it has fallen from heaven to bolster up what is in all probability the most preposterous argument ever submitted to an English court of justice.

"Let us realize, definitely and concisely, what that argument is. Louis Tanquered (or Paul Brazil) and James Stanton, the prosecution say, were suffocated to death, both in the same peculiar and special manner, by pressure applied to close the mouth and nose, while they were unconscious and unable to defend themselves. As to the truth of this, there is considerable medical disagreement, at least in the case of Louis Tanquered. But we will suppose for the moment that the contention of the prosecution is correct.

"In the year 1828 there was committed in Edinburgh—a hundred years ago, gentlemen, and in another country—a series of abominable murders by two men named Burke and Hare—committed by suffocating their victims in a particular and special way to avoid suspicious appearances on the bodies which they disposed of for dissection to a well-known surgeon and anatomist of Edinburgh. This particular method was by applying pressure to the nose and under the chin to close the mouth, and their victims were in nearly every case first rendered helpless by spirits.

"The link which is to span this gap of a hundred years is Theresa Stanton's statement, made forty years ago, which, it is contended, proves that the prisoner is the great-grandchild of William Hare, the accomplice of Burke.

"And therefore, says the prosecution triumphantly, since Louis Tanquered and James Stanton were murdered in the same way that Hare and Burke murdered their victims, Gretta Higgins murdered them.

"I think, gentlemen, we all of us are at a loss to know

whether the prosecution really intends this part of their case to be taken seriously, and to decide whether we should not merely stand aghast at the levity and audacity which has ventured to put forward such a theory in support of its charge against the life of a human creature. But, it seems, they wish it to be taken seriously. Let us endeavor to do so. Let us, since no chain is stronger than its weakest link, consider first Theresa Stanton's statement.

"It purports, as I have said, to have been made on oath on January 1st, 1889, by Theresa Stanton, at City Meads Street, Westmouth, in the presence of seven witnesses. It affirms, in summary, that a man called John Perry murdered Jacob Stanton the husband of the deponent, Theresa Stanton, at York in the year 1830, by suffocating him; that afterwards she lived with this man and had by him a child who died and a child named Harold who survived; that in 1838 a drunken Irishwoman came to the shop which Perry then conducted in this city and told her that Perry was her husband and that his real name was William Hare, and that he was the Edinburgh murderer of that name, who had saved his life by turning king's evidence upon his accomplice Burke. That she then left Perry and went to America. That she lived in America forty-eight years. That she returned in 1886 to England, and, finding her sons Harold and William alive, made up her mind that, to atone for what she had done or allowed to be done, she would cause her son Harold to give up to his brother William—her lawful child by her lawful husband—the business then conducted by Harold, but which of right and justice should have belonged to William.

"Taking it at its face value, gentlemen, a statement made—sixty years after the event—by a woman who had assisted at the murder of her husband by her paramour, containing an

alleged statement made to her by a drunken Irishwoman fifty-one years before her own statement was made. You will judge, I am sure, of the confidence to be reposed in this precious document.

"The prosecution, however, find it more trustworthy than, I feel sure, it will appear to you. They accept the statement of the assistant murderess that the drunken Irishwoman told her that her paramour, John Perry or John Stanton, was William Hare, the Edinburgh murderer and informer. They tell us that Harold Stanton was his son by Theresa Stanton—the son of William Hare, the Edinburgh murderer. That Harold Stanton's daughter, Pauline Stanton, afterwards Pauline Brazil and later Pauline Higgins, was the granddaughter of William Hare, the Edinburgh murderer—and that Gretta Higgins is the great-granddaughter of William Hare the Edinburgh murderer, and they ask us for this reason to believe that this cultured, innocent, and beautiful girl, hitherto admired and respected by everyone who has been brought into contact with her, is therefore to be convicted of the two abominable crimes with which she is charged.

"On what grounds, gentlemen. We have had a great deal of vague reference to a heritage of homicide—astonishing alliteration. At these confused gropings in psychology we have smiled and yawned alternately. But the prosecution have fortunately something more definite to offer us. Louis Tanquered and James Stanton, they say, were murdered by suffocation; Jacob Stanton was murdered by John Perry, by suffocation; Gretta Higgins is the great-grandchild of John Perry; therefore she murdered Louis Tanquered and James Stanton by suffocating them. Gentlemen, if the issue were not one of such dreadful seriousness, if the charge were not such that your minds must be filled at this moment with the

deepest and gravest anxiety as to the duty which lies before you, such an argument could be regarded merely as ludicrous or the imagining of insanity.

"But we must at least try to take it seriously. For it is supported by another effort of the prosecution's imagination. Not alone, they say, were Louis Tanquered and James Stanton killed in the same way as Jacob Stanton was killed by John Perry, alias Hare—and in the same way that the victims of Burke and Hare are known to have been killed—but the very details of that method were adopted by the prisoner. And, abandoning alliteration and homicidal heritages, the prosecution aver that Pauline Stanton, the prisoner's mother, who was a witness to the statement of Theresa Stanton, knew its purport and was present when it was read over to and signed by Theresa Stanton, so that she knew exactly how her grandfather John Perry had murdered Jacob Stanton. And therefore, they argue, her daughter Gretta Higgins must, too, have had that knowledge—because she must have obtained it from her mother. And therefore, they say, when she murdered Louis Tanquered and James Stanton, she murdered them in precisely the same way.

"Gentlemen, I ask you, have you ever heard a weaker, a more grotesque or a more absurd figment of the imagination upon which to ask a jury to sentence a fellow-creature to an ignominious and dishonored death?

"You have heard *ad nauseam* the history of the shocking series of crimes committed in Edinburgh in the year 1828, which caused the country to ring with the names of William Burke and William Hare[1] and added a new word to the vocabulary of our language. These two miscreants, both Irish-

[1] The trial of these two scoundrels, edited by W. Roughead, is included in the *Notable British Trial Scenes*, published by Hodges & Co., Ltd.

men and ex-soldiers, discovered that money could be made quickly, easily, and safely by the sale of bodies as anatomical subjects to a certain celebrated anatomist of that time, Dr. Robert Knox. No questions were asked; a ten-pound note was always forthcoming on the nail. Disdaining the slower and more risky methods of the "resurrection-men" who rifled the churchyards, they conceived the idea of producing a perennial supply of fresh subject by murdering unfortunate persons whom they enticed into their dens in the lowest part of the city, intoxicating them, and then suffocating them. In the year 1828, upon their admission, undoubtedly assisted by the woman who lived with them, they murdered sixteen persons in this manner and disposed of their bodies. What the actual total was will now never be known; but it was believed at the time that their own appalling estimate lay far below the truth. Incredible as it may appear, their devilish industry proceeded for a long time without arousing suspicion, at all events in any respectable quarter. But at length retribution fell upon them—information was given to the police—and they were arrested.

"The circumstances were such that, to insure the punishment of at least one of the malefactors, it was found necessary to permit the other to give evidence against him—turn king's evidence, as the phrase is, on the condition of absolute immunity. Burke was hanged upon his partner's evidence—and the partner was duly released and let loose upon the world again.

"On a Thursday night early in the February of 1829 William Hare was let out of Calton Jail and driven to Newington, where he boarded the mail for the south. The mail stopped at Noblehouse, the first stage between Edinburgh and Dumfries, and there he was recognized by a fellow-passenger and

mobbed, being rescued by the police from serious danger at the hands of a large and angry crowd. For a day and a night the mob besieged the jail in which he was lodged for his safety. But in the early hours of Saturday he was safely got away under escort of an armed guard, set on the Annan road, and left there to go whither he pleased—save backwards.

"The *Dumfries Courier* of February 10th, 1829, reports that he was known to have crossed the Border by daybreak on Sunday, and that on Monday the driver of the north mail reported having passed him on the road half a mile outside Carlisle. Another report stated that he was seen on the following Sunday a couple of miles south of Carlisle. The rest—for a hundred years—has been silence.

"For a little while, indeed, rumor had its way with that once dreaded name—for a little while, legend. Then, save for the curious in such matters, it passed into oblivion—until, after a hundred years the famous statement of Theresa Stanton has set it once more upon the lips of an amazed public.

"Now, at last, say the prosecution, the mystery is cleared up. That sinister figure which disappeared from human ken two miles south of Carlisle was seen again—on the same road, no very great distance further on, and very soon afterwards—by Jacob Stanton and his wife Theresa, sitting on the roadside mending his boots, as their show-vans went slowly by on their way into Lancaster from the north.

"So the thread is picked up—the link forged—to the satisfaction of the prosecution.

"It has been proved to us—you will recall the person, who, to prove that he had a house to sell, exhibited a brick—it has been proved to us beyond all doubt that one Jacob Stanton was the proprietor of a traveling show, a species of circus, which toured the northern part of England at that period.

We have actually been shown one of his showbills, discovered by the industry of the prosecution among the treasures of a Yorkshire collector of such curios. But, gentlemen, we have also been shown and looked upon with horror another relic of those far-off days—the portrait of William Hare, made at the time by McKee. Here it is, gentlemen of the jury. Look with disgust and repulsion upon that hideous and diabolically-leering mask. Raise then your eyes to that sweet and gentle face whose loveliness fronts the challenge of your eyes with the serenity and the courage of conscious innocence. And ask yourselves if on your consciences you can for an instant believe that from such a monster can by any conceivable freak of nature have sprung Gretta Higgins. . . ."

Without doubt the eloquence of counsel and his biting irony, no less than the beauty of the prisoner, had their share in the verdict of the jury. The prosecution's case, however, really broke down because it failed to produce satisfying motive for either murder.

The original program had been sufficiently definite upon the question of motive. Gretta Higgins, it would contend, had murdered Paul Brazil because he knew that she had murdered the boy Philip Greston and had threatened to divulge the fact; she had murdered James Stanton because she knew that he knew the substance of and had in his actual possession a document which—since the murder of the child—might expose her to grave danger if it fell into the hands of the police. She was aware that Mr. Stanton's suspicions had been aroused and that he was making inquiries concerning Pauline Brazil and her children. Her intention was to get possession of that document by hook or crook and destroy

it—and to silence the voice that could have spoken as to its contents.

But the prosecution had, on the very eve of the trial, found itself gravely embarrassed by the defection of Dr. Waudby. At the last moment Dr. Waudby found himself unable to swear that at the time he had definitely noted any indications which pointed to the child's having been suffocated by any means save by the gravel which had fallen upon him. Hurriedly the program of the prosecution had been altered. Since no reference was to be made to Philip Greston's death, the motive for the murder of Paul Brazil must be made the desire to obtain possession of the diamonds which Gretta Higgins knew he had in his possession. The motive alleged for the murder of James Stanton remained unaltered except that it had arisen in the prisoner's breast after the murder of Brazil—instead of after that of the child. But, since an attack of a murderous nature was alleged to have been made on Mr. Stanton before the murder of Brazil, this suggestion lost most of its force for the jury. They took less than half an hour to return a unanimous verdict of "Not guilty."

CHAPTER XXII

Extract from Colonel Gore's Case-book, No. 67:

Too much stress was laid on the heredity idea—and the jury refused to swallow it. Poor old Cowlishaw just tickled them to death. They hated Mr. Henry Stanton. They loathed Lumley. And I think most of them thought it more likely than not that I had done both jobs.

Miss Higgins looked perfectly angelic. Curiously enough, I noticed that her eyebrows had the same unusually high arch as those in the drawing of Hare. She kept her hands out of sight carefully; it is to be supposed she will do the same with the diamonds. Shadgold told me that, after her arrest, swarms of hopeful treasure-hunters started digging up the country all round Danmore Lodge until the police got busy.

Only one person can tell us what exactly was Burgin's share in the business; it's not likely that she will. James Stanton, too, will always puzzle me a bit. He was a curious, complex little fellow and had an odd, perverse kind of humor. It's certain, I think, that he dreaded the old family ghost's possible resurrection when Brazil turned up. Certainly, after that night at the inn, he was scared about himself—so badly that he was afraid to admit it even to himself. But even before that he was on the hop; I have sometimes thought that the elaborate pains he took that day in his office to let Mrs. Tanquered know that we were looking up the family history for him may have been intended as a warning to Brazil; perhaps he reckoned on Mrs. Tanquered's passing it on. Or perhaps he merely wanted to discover if she knew of Brazil's relationship to himself. As I say, he was a curious little chap.

But the most interesting thing about the whole affair is that remark he made to me once: "We all have odd bits in us—other people's remnants—the Lord knows whose——"

THE END

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